A TROVE OF GOLDEN AGE TREASURES

The GOLDEN AGE of COMICS

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No. 1
December

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CANADA

Pierce On Fawcett's Captain Marvel

Goulart On The Original DAREDEVIL

Curtis On Walt Kelly's Mouse

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Non-Comics Contributors This Issue: Bob Lewis, Don and Maggie Thompson, Ron Goulart, Betsy Curtis, John G. Pierce, Brian Pearce

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All in Color for a Dime

by Don and Maggie Thompson

The Golden Age of Comics is designed to function as a treasure trove of past glories of the four-color world. When we find stories of interest from long-dead comics companies, we can bring them to fans who would otherwise have to spend hundreds of dollars to see them. When we get an article that presents an intriguing view of a Golden Age treasure, we can bring it to readers who can find little being printed about comics long past.

It is our belief that in an ideal world, nothing would ever go out of print. It should be possible for fans and casual readers alike to obtain the complete *Action Comics*, the complete works of Milton Caniff, and the entire run of any comic book, comic strip, or magazine at libraries. This magazine is a small step toward that Utopian dream - we will present a sampling of the untold wealth that has been, up to now, available only to a handful of long-time or wealthy (or both) collectors.

We're eager to see what you can come up with that will interest other fans of the Golden Age. We have in the planning stage: forums on maintaining your collection, a cover gallery with commentary, cartoons on comics collecting and on the old comics themselves, and, of course, much more. Have you an unusual item in your collection you feel we should print? Let us know about it. This magazine will change to reflect its readers' interests - to offer you what you want to read.

We are wide open to submissions of articles and cartoons from our readers and we pay for them upon publication. Before sending us your article, however, please check at your public library for instructions on how to prepare a manuscript. A guide to contributors will appear soon in this and other New Media Publishing magazines, but you need not wait for that - standard rules of manuscript preparation will suffice.

We will consider reprinting articles and cartoons from limited-run (under 1,000 circulation) comics fanzines, although we can pay only half our usual rate for reprints.

Our contributors this time include:

Betsy Curtis, whose article on Walt Kelly's "Nibble and Nubble" appears in this issue, began collecting Walt Kelly comics before there was an organized comics fandom. She became engrossed with comic books when she read them to her daughter - who grew up to be one of the co-editors of *The Golden Age of Comics*. Betsy is a free-lance writer whose science-fiction story "A Peculiar People" was included in a best-of-the-year anthology in the Fifties and whose SF story "The Steiger Effect" was nominated for a best-of-the-year Hugo Award in 1966. She sold stories to most of the SF magazines of the Fifties and Sixties.

Ron Goulart, whose piece on *Daredevil* appears herein, is an extremely prolific author whose range of subjects includes SF, mystery, adventure, and Western fiction as well as nonfiction about comic books and strips of decades past. He created and wrote the *Star Hawks* comic strip with artist Gil Kane. Among his hundred or so books are *After Things Fell Apart*, *Big Bang*, and the mystery anthology *The Great British Detectives*. His *The Adventurous Decade* is about adventure comic strips of the Thirties.

John G. Pierce, born in 1947, obviously didn't collect Fawcett comics during the Forties but became an enthusiast after reading articles about the Big Red Cheese. He later became a Fawcett collector and says, "Those articles didn't exaggerate a bit. If anything, they didn't even come close to conveying how great Captain Marvel really was." To correct this situation, John publishes his own Fawcett fanzine, *The Whiz Kids*.

Those of you who saw ads for this magazine may note some small differences between what was promised and what is delivered. That is because when we were given the chance to print the first two episodes of Walt Kelly's incredibly rare *Peter Wheat*, we rushed to do so. Some promised items - an interview with Will Eisner and "Captain Venture and the Planet Princess" - will be in our next issue, along with even more surprises.

What lies ahead? Maybe fewer reprints and more articles - or vice versa. Which would you prefer? Your letters will help us decide which course to follow.

And yes, there will be a letter column in future issues - if *you* write the interesting letters to fill it.

THE OTHER

DAREDEVIL

By Ron Goulart

In 1964, a fellow calling himself Daredevil appeared on the newsstands of America. Innocent young readers accepted him on face value and Marvel has kept his magazine going ever since.

He's an imposter.

He may be "a" Daredevil, but he isn't "the" Daredevil. The true and authentic Daredevil was born way back in 1940 in *Silver Streak Comics*. He graduated to a magazine of his own in 1941 and managed to stay in business for nearly a decade. His saga was written and drawn by various writers and artists, including two of the most innovative and influential men of the long-vanished Golden Age. He fought one of the foulest villains ever to grace the pulpy pages of a funny book and his costume, while not exactly functional, was among the more striking of the era. And you couldn't help admiring a guy who went after human fiends, werewolves, ladykillers, and gigantic Oriental menaces while armed only with a boomerang.

Silver Streak was a magazine that got going before most of its lead characters were on board, which is probably appropriate for a comic book named after a train. With one exception, none of the characters in the first issue lasted beyond the second. The Silver Streak himself didn't show up until No. 3, and in his debut he was a racing car driver and not the human meteor he subsequently became. The leading character in the first half-dozen issues (and even he failed to show up in Nos. 3, 4, and 5) was a villain. When Daredevil finally came along in No. 6, the magazine was definitely in need of a star. Even so, he sort of slipped into the issue in the middle of the book without causing much of a stir. Somehow, though, between that issue and the next he became the head man.

What transformed Daredevil into a bankable hero were his encounters with "the world's most fantastic criminal," namely The Claw. The quintessential sinister Oriental, The Claw loomed into view in the first issue of *Silver Streak*, putting him on the scene several months before our hero. "A monster of miraculous powers who is out to dominate the universe," The Claw had all the vicious attributes of the better known Dr. Fu Manchu. What gave him an extra edge, for those of us who doted on his early misdeeds, was the fact he could grow several stories high at will. Seeing The Claw come swelling up out of a midnight sea smack in the path of an unsuspecting ocean liner or watching him squeeze a disloyal minion to death in one huge hand while chuckling, "Die, swine!", were awesome experiences indeed. Completely evil, The Claw lived but to kill, plunder, and ravage. In his earliest forays against humanity, he was opposed by various business-suited civilians. The Claw easily upstaged them, and what was clearly needed was a hero to match him. Which is where Daredevil came in.

But first, a word about Jack Cole. Cole had come to Manhattan in 1936, from the wilds of Pennsylvania, bringing his bride and an enormous ambition to succeed as a cartoonist. He was twenty-two and had borrowed $100 to finance his assault on the big time. Although his first love seems always to have been gag cartooning, the market conditions in the Depression-ridden Thirties forced Cole into the comic-book business. Around 1937, he took a job with the sweat shop run by the enterprising Harry "A" Chesler. Chesler, whose Fifth Avenue headquarters was grinding out stories and artwork for the growing comic book business, also employed Fred Schwab, Charles Biro, Gill Fox, Jack Binder, Carl Burgos, Fred Guardineer, and quite a few others who would eventually spread

out to staff most of the publishing houses. As a result of this stint, Cole's work, mostly in the big-foot camp at first, commenced appearing in early comic books such as *Funny Picture Stories* and *Star Ranger Funnies*. He also dabbled in some straight stuff and late in 1939, took on the editorship of the new *Silver Streak Comics*. It was here that Cole, who also wrote his own scripts, introduced The Claw. His serious drawing maintained most of the virtues of his funny stuff and even in this early work, he's starting to get the action, characterization, and eccentric layouts that would do so much to enhance his later, and considerably more successful, *Plastic Man*.

It's difficult to be sure after over forty years, but the early issues of *Silver Streak*, with the exception of Cole's contribution, look to have been put together from leftovers provided by art shops such as Chesler's and the newer one started by Lloyd Jacquet. How else can you account for such non-winners as "The Wasp" by Art Pinajian, "Calling the Duke" by Larry Antonette and "Red Reeves, Boy Magician" by Harold DeLay? For some reason, The Claw took a leave of absence after two issues, despite a note at the end of the second episode advising readers to "Watch for 'The Claw' in America!" in the next issue. Cole actually did a script for that third episode, but apparently never drew it. Years later, the script turned up in the files of the long-defunct Jacquet shop. The Claw finally recurred in No. 6. Cole did one of his most impressive covers, featuring a giant Claw about to crush a handful of agonized folks in his massive paw. The story inside is about the Green Claw, though, and is drawn by Newton Alfred and not Cole.

In the same issue, Daredevil shows up. Cole has been given credit by-at least one historian for having had a hand in this initial story, but that seems unlikely since it looks very much like the standard Chesler shop product and the artwork is by Jack Binder. Daredevil's debut occupies but eight pages in the center of the book and is not an especially auspicious one. We are told that Bart Hill was "orphaned by thugs who ruthlessly killed his parents and left him speechless by the torture they inflicted on him." Bart Hill grew into manhood possessed with the determination to destroy the forces of crime and evil!" The torture included, for some reason, having a boomerang-shaped brand mark burned into his chest. Sufficient reason probably for him to take to using the Australian weapon in his later crimefighting. The initial exploit is a fairly tame cops-and-robbers affair with the big, climactic battle occurring in no place more exotic than a lumber yard. The fact that Daredevil is mute isn't used to any purpose and about the only interesting thing about him is that costume of his. Skintight and divided from head to toe, bright crimson on the right and midnight blue on the left. The spiked belt, looking something like a large golden dog collar, adds just the right unsettling touch. Practical it isn't, but it helps build up the new character's sinister, almost Satanic, image. Even Binder's foursquare style can't completely spoil that effect.

The next month, Cole does something audacious. He pretends he's working with an old established hero and announces on his poster-like bright red cover "DAREDEVIL BATTLES THE CLAW." The *Silver Streak Comics* title appears in dinky letters along the top, indicating that the crimson-and-blue fellow seen here is the star of the show. This was just a few months after the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner had carried on their monumental three-issue battle over at *Marvel Mystery Comics*, and Cole must've assumed comic book readers would go for another full-scale fracas. He devoted the first sixteen pages of the issue to round one, starting off with a socko splash that shows The Claw, Daredevil, a sparsely clad young woman about to be burned at the stake, and a half dozen or more sinister Asiatics. That's followed by a teaser disclaimer, stating "WARNING!! You are about to read one of the most astounding tales ever portrayed in a comic magazine! If you have a weak heart, we advise you NOT to venture further!" Cole obviously had fun drawing this one. He manages to throw in the war in Europe to introduce Bart Hill's lovely girl friend Tonia, to ignore the fact that Bart was ever mute, to take us to The Claw's mountain stronghold in faroff Tibet to show The Claw's sinister invasion army heading for America via their own private subterranean railway, and climax it all with a battle in the streets of Manhattan between the gigantic Claw, the biggest thing to hit town since King Kong, and Daredevil. The Claw's wild punches topple skyscrapers, Daredevil gives him a hot-foot with a stick of dynamite. At the windup of

the contest, The Claw scoops up our hero and makes a try at swallowing him alive. The resourceful Daredevil has a trick up his sleeve. "If dynamite down his windpipe fails, I'll soon be ground meat!" But the unexpected explosion causes the Claw to cough up his enemy. The battle continues for four more issues.

By the time the protracted tussle wound up, Lev Gleason, a veteran of several years in the comic-book business and the former editor of the sedate *Tip Top Comics*, had bought into the company. Cole had departed and Daredevil fell into the heavy hands of Don Rico. Fortunately, Gleason had additional plans for old DD. In the summer of 1941, a new magazine was launched, the first issue entitled *Daredevil Battles Hitler*. This pilot issue had all the *Silver Streak* heroes teaming with Daredevil to take turns at giving Hitler and the Nazis assorted trouble. Art and copy for this one were by Funnies, Inc., Lloyd Jacquet's shop. This was the group who'd also cooked up the first issues of *Marvel Mystery*, *Target*, *Blue Bolt*, etc. Among the artists were George Mandel, Bill Everett, Bob Davis, and Harry Sahle. On the inside back cover was an ad for *Daredevil Comics*. "BY POPULAR DEMAND--What you've all been waiting for--the DAREDEVIL'S OWN COMIC BOOK". While the Jacquet crew was preparing the Hitler number, Gleason had brought in Charles Biro along with Bob Wood to provide the regular issues of the new title. Biro, after leaving Chesler, had been running things at MLJ and turning out *Pep Comics*, *Top-Notch* and the rest of that house's pre-Archie titles. It was while at MLJ that Biro, as artist, writer and editor, abandoned his interest in cute, big-foot cartooning. What he developed next was a blend of action, violence, bloodshed, and slinky sex. He'd exploit that further with Gleason and finally come up with one of the Forties' most successful comic books, *Crime Does Not Pay*.

While Daredevil went stumbling along in the fading *Silver Streak*, the new, improved Biro version flourished in the new magazine. In his first Daredevil yarn, Biro pitted his crimson-and-blue hero against a sexy lady who was actually a reanimated mummy. Unlike many of his do-gooder contemporaries, DD is not above sharing a glass of wine and a warm embrace with a lovely lady protagonist of this sort. In subsequent issues, Daredevil combats a wolf with a human brain, a strangler who commits his crimes in drag, and a Deadly Dozen that includes such stalwarts as the Crusher, the Butcher, Lady Killer, and the Sniffer (a lowbrowed human bloodhound who became so popular that he was reformed and spun off into a strip of his own). Besides exploiting the blend of sex and violence that was an MLJ hallmark, Biro added packaging tricks that later became standard for the field. From its first issue, *Daredevil* bore the slogan "The Greatest Name in Comics," and there were boxes of copy and multi-color headlines promising all sorts of delights, including money ($100, CASH PRIZES You May WIN), to be found within. One of my favorite Biro covers appears on issue No. 11. We are in a shadowy dungeon beneath a madhouse and the cells are packed with gibbering lunatics. In the foreground, oblivious to the fast-approaching Daredevil, is a lovely redhaired young woman in a silken evening gown. She is tied to a post in a seated position and her feet are imprisoned in a padlocked stock. A gentleman made up as the Hunchback of Notre Dame is drooling madly over her while he tickles her bare foot with a feather.

Biro developed the habit in these early yarns of addressing his readers directly, often hyping the story that was about to unfold. "None can rival the wild fantasy that will unfold within these pages! ... So dim the lights and lock your doors well for this monster might strike at even YOU!" He was also great at teasing readers. A story entitled "The Case of the Mysterious Trunk" was originally announced for No. 5 but didn't show up until No. 7. In No. 5 Biro explained, "Due to a serious event, it is unwise for me to present 'The Case of the Mysterious Trunk' this month as promised in the last issue. Instead, it will appear in the next issue ... then I will be free to explain the reason for the postponement...". But in No. 6 he told us, "Because of new shocking developments in 'The Case of the Mysterious Trunk,' I regret that I must postpone the story one more month. It is beyond my control to reveal this case or give you the reason for not doing this." As to what was actually inside that trunks...you'll have to unearth *Daredevil* No. 7 to find out.

Initially his Daredevil was akin to Jack Cole's. Since DD had nary a super power, he had to use his wits and be in crackerjack physical shape. He was also one of those heroes who loved to

wisecrack while battling the forces of evil ("Your skull must be as thick as your brain, but I'll bet you have a glass jaw!"). As Biro worked with the character over the months, Daredevil began to develop a didactic side ("You look like a smart kid who knows better than to drink."). Finally, in issue No. 13, Daredevil acquires a group he can preach to and feel paternal towards on a full-time basis. He meets the Little Wise Guys, not realizing that in but a few short years, these aggressively likeable lads will toss him clean out of his own magazine.

The idea that a gang of feisty, two-fisted boys could be entertaining had popped up in 1937, after Warner Brothers's movie version of the hit play *Dead End* had brought Leo Gorcey, Bobby Jordan, Billy Halop, and the rest to the attention of a wide public. The plucky, tough-talking kids' most successful piece of larceny was stealing the picture from Humphrey Bogart and the other old pros. More Dead End Kids movies followed, including two made with our current President, and then splinter groups formed, giving us The Little Tough Guys, The East Side Kids, The Bowery Boys, etc. The Dead End Kids themselves turned up in *Shadow Comics* in the spring of 1941, but caused not a stir, and it remained for the team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby to produce the first successful variations. They began with the Young Allies in late 1941, followed them with the Newsboy Legion and the Boy Commandos in the spring of 1942. Biro, therefore, wasn't covering especially new ground when he introduced his kid gang to Daredevil in the fall of 1942. He and his cohorts had, however, come up with the notion that boys wanted boy heroes to identify with. That notion had already brought a new Gleason title, *Boy Comics*, into being and was now spreading to the flagship magazine.

The original Wise-Guys were Peewee, Scarecrow, Meatball, and Jock. Unlike some earlier kid gangs, they weren't all urban street kids. Scarecrow was a country bumpkin, Meatball was a runaway orphan, Jock was a rich kid, and only Peewee was from the tenement district. After teaming up and meeting Daredevil, they help him wipe out a Nazi sabotage ring called the German-American Cult. At the end of this twenty-page debut story (that was extremely long back when thirteen pages was average for the main hero in any comic book), Daredevil asks us to write in and tell him "whether you liked my strip better before of after the 'Little Wise Guys' got into it." Obviously Biro was playing one of his pitchman games because in the very next issue, which must have been at the printers when No. 13 hit the stands, we are told "Thanx a million!! For the thousands upon thousands of wonderful letters!! ... Before the contest was a week old, we were thoroughly convinced that the 'Little Wise Guys' were a hit--you had welcomed them with open arms and demanded that they remain with DAREDEVIL in his strip!!" And remain they did. All except poor Meatball.

In the very next issue, Biro kills him off. Leaving his sickbed to carry an important message to his pals, Meatball somehow contracts pneumonia and passes away in a tale that mixes the hardboiled with the Dickensian. Comic-book characters didn't die that often in those days, but in killing off a character who'd hardly established himself, Biro blunted some of the sought-after effect. Meatball was replaced with a lad named Curly, a reformed delinquent. Daredevil held the center stage again in issue No. 18, wherein a brand-new origin was recounted. In this one, probably to account for that damn boomerang, young Bart Hill is abandoned in the wilds of Australia and raised by pygmies. The distinctive Daredevil suit turns out to have originally belonged to a pygmy chief. Like supermarket sox, it apparently fits all sizes. After this last fling, Daredevil drops back increasingly into his avuncular role as the Wise Guys go on to get involved with street crime, delinquency, and assorted other sociological soap opera topics. It's possible Biro intended these rather preachy tales as a counterbalance for the blood-and-guts fare he was helping concoct for *Crime Does Not Pay*, which had become the bestselling Gleason comic book. At any rate, the bizarre villains and plots of Daredevil's early years vanish and the more uplifting stories take over. After playing less and less important roles, DD finally drops out for good in the winter of 1950. The magazine, still bearing his name, continued until 1956. Biro, who'd been farming out the artwork to Carl Hubbell, Norman Maurer, and Dan Barry and most of the scriptwriting to Virginia Hubbell, probably didn't feel any great pangs at putting Daredevil out to pasture.

Looking back, though, you can't help wishing he'd held on to Daredevil and retired those godawful kids.

DAREDEVIL
NEVER BEFORE HAS A STORY OF SUCH POWER AND MAGNITUDE APPEARED BEFORE THE MAGAZINE PUBLIC. MY FRIENDS HAVE DARED ME TO PRODUCE IT, SAYING THAT I WOULD BE EXPOSING MYSELF AND DAREDEVIL TO SERIOUS RIDICULE. I DEFY ANY TRUE AMERICAN TO PROVE THAT THIS STORY IS POINTLESS AND DOES NOT DRIVE HOME A STRONG PATRIOTIC MESSAGE!"
CHARLES BIRO
IN HEAVEN'S NAME DON'T, PLEASE!"
DAREDEVIL BATTLES THE
"BLACKHEARTS IN WHITE"
HELP COMBAT CROOKS, READ CRIME DOES NOT PAY

Daredevil #13 (October 1942). copyright 1942 by Comic House, Inc.

THIS STORY MAY SEEM UTTERLY FANTASTIC AND YOU MAY DOUBT IT'S HONEST, BUT AFTER YOU FINISH, ASK YOURSELF 3 QUESTIONS. DID I ENJOY IT? DO I LOVE AMERICA MORE? HOW CAN I HELP WIN THE WAR?
Presenting "BLACK HEARTS IN WHITE"
GOOD MORNING MISS FUDDLE! WE'RE HERE TO TAKE OUR LITTLE BABY HOME!
MEATBALL IS UPSTAIRS PACKING NOW! I'LL CALL HIM DOWN!
HEY, MEATBALL COME ON DOWN HERE!!
OH, HERMAN! JUST THINK, A WEE CHILD ALL OF OUR OWN!!
THEY'RE CALLIN' YA, MEATBALL!!
WELL, THIS IS IT, FELLERS! I'M SURE GONNA HATE TO LEAVE YOU GUYS!
KEEP YOUR CHIN UP!
WE'RE GONNA MISS YOU TOO MEATBALL!
IS MY ITZY BITZY BABY GOING TO LOVE HIS NEW MUMMY! YUM YUM! GIVE MUMMY A BIG KISS!
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, MA'AM, I'LL GO UPSTAIRS AND FINISH MY PACKING!
IT'S NO USE, FELLERS, I CAN'T DO IT! I CAN'T LIVE WITH THAT FEMALE! SHE THINKS I'M 2 YEARS OLD!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, MEATBALL RUN AWAY?
GOODBYE, AND THANKS FOR HELPIN' ME! JUST STALL 'EM LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO GET FAR ENOUGH AWAY!
SO LONG, AND GOOD LUCK!
DON'T WORRY, MEATBALL! LEAVE 'EM TO US!
I CAN'T WALK ANYMORE! I CAN GET SOME REST IN THAT BARN!

HAVE YOU READ THE LATEST BOY COMICS YET — GET IT TODAY!

WHILE SOMEWHERE IN THE FARM COUNTRY..
I OUGHT TO HAVE MY HEAD EXAMINED FOR BRINGING YOU ALONG, SCARECROW! YOU'RE BOUND TO DO SOMETHING DUMB THAT WILL COST ME MONEY!
DON'T WORRY, MR. HARDTACK! I WON'T DO NOTHIN' TO SPOIL NOTHIN', HONEST!
I'M GOIN' OVER TO THE BANK, SCARECROW, AN' I'M LEAVIN' YOU WITH THE TWO HORSES TO SELL! THEY HAVE THE PRICE TAGS ON THEM AN' THAT'S WHAT YOU SELL 'EM FOR!
OKAY, MR. HARDTACK! YOU LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME!
WHAT CAN GO WRONG? ONLY TWO HORSES LEFT! THE WHITE ONE SELLS FOR $100 AND THE BROWN ONE $150!" THAT'S SIMPLE, ISN'T IT?
I'D LIKE TO BUY A HORSE, SONNY! THIS BROWN ONE, HOW MUCH IS IT?
GOSH! A CUSTOMER! IT'S $150, BUT THE WHITE ONE IS ONLY $100!
BOY $100! WON'T MR. HARDTACK BE SURPRISED!
MAYBE THAT MAN WOULDA' BOUGHT THE BROWN ONE IF I HADN'T TOLD HIM ABOUT THE WHITE ONE BEING CHEAPER!
BACK AGAIN, MISTER? MAYBE YOU WANT TO BUY THE OTHER HORSE TOO!!
I CHANGED MY MIND, KID! I WANT THE BROWN ONE! I'VE ALREADY GIVEN YOU A HUNDRED DOLLARS, AND THIS WHITE HORSE IS WORTH A $100, SO THAT MAKES $200! THE BROWN ONE IS $150! NOW IF YOU'LL GIVE ME $50 AND THE BROWN HORSE, WE'RE SQUARE, RIGHT?
LET ME SEE... HMM.. THAT SOUNDS FAIR ENOUGH!

ALL THE THRILLS OF TEN MAGAZINES IN "CRIME DOES NOT PAY"!

HA, HA, HA! WHAT A DUMB JERK! I DIDN'T THINK THEY CAME THAT STUPID ANYMORE!
WHAT A SMART MAN! HE MADE EVERYTHING SO CLEAR AND SIMPLE!!
GOSH
WELL, SCARECROW, I SEE YOU SOLD THE BROWN HORSE! GIVE ME THE HUNDRED FIFTY DOLLARS!
I..I CAN EXPLAIN EVERYTHING, MR. HARDTACK! Y..YOU SEE, IT WAS LIKE THIS..
GOSH, AM I DUMB! I DON'T BLAME 'IM FOR FIRIN' ME! I WISH HE GAVE ME SOME OF MY BACK PAY THOUGH!
THE BARN BEHIND THAT ESTATE LOOKS LIKE A PLACE TO GET SOME SLEEP!
WHILE IN A NEARBY BIG CITY'S TENEMENT DISTRICT...
PAPER!! READ ALL ABOUT IT!! PAPER!!

CRIME BUSTER'S MONKEY SEES EVIL, HEARS EVIL, AND HATES EVIL!

HELLOOO PEE WEE! TODAY IS COLLECTING DAY REMEMBER ??
AW, GEE, HORSEHIDE, YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT!
I DON'T ASK YOU TO WAIT FOR YOUR PROTECTION, DO I? IT AIN'T NICE OF YOU TA ASK ME TA WAIT, PEE WEE!
HONEST, I AIN'T SOLD A PAPER YET! SEARCH ME!
YEAH, I UNDERSTAN' YOU AIN'T GOT TH' DOUGH! LEMME SEE TH' HEADLINES!
SURE, HORSEHIDE! YOU CAN HAVE THE WHOLE PAPER FREE!
I'LL TAKE 'EM ALL! AN' FROM NOW ON, YOU'RE PAYIN' 50¢ A WEEK INSTEAD OF 10¢! AN' YOU BETTER HAVE IT TOMORROW OR ELSE!
PULL THE CAR OVER TO THE CURB, WILLIAM! A BIG BULLY IS TORMENTING SOME CHILD!
YES, MASTER!!
SIR, PLEASE GIVE AN ACCOUNT AS TO WHY YOU'RE PICKING ON A CHILD 2/3 YOUR SIZE!!
WHAT!!

BE LIKE DAREDEVIL, ALWAYS ON THE LEVEL!

THOSE GLASSES AIN'T GONNA SAVE YOU FROM GETTIN' YOUR BIG NOSE PUSHED IN! YA DON'T LIKE MY TREATMENT, HUH?
NO, AND I THINK YOU OUGHT TO PAY FOR THE PAPERS!
HEY, GUY! THAT'S HORSEHIDE! HE'LL MURDER YA! YA BETTER AMSCRAY!
OH, BOY! OH, BOY!! OH, BOY!!!
GEE, ITZI, OR WHATEVER YOU CALL IT, I AIN'T FIGHTIN' A GUY WHO DOES DAT!
WELL, THEN, STAND UP AND SEE IF YOU ARE BETTER AT BOXING!
WHASSA MATTER, HORSEHIDE, GETTIN' TANNED?
UGH
HOW MUCH WERE YOUR PAPERS WORTH?
GEE, I THOUGHT ALL RICH GUYS WAS SISSIES! AW, FORGET TH' PAPERS, YOU'VE DONE 'NUFF!
OH, NO! HORSEHIDE WISHES TO REIMBERSE YOU!
YA MEAN HE WANTS TA PAY FOR TH' PAPES, AN MAYBE TH' PROTECTION MONEY TOO, HUH?
YOU'RE AN OKAY GUY! I'M PEEWEE! WHAT'S YOUR TAG?
MY TAG? OH, MY NAME! I'M JOCK C HERENDEEN THE SECOND! I MUST RUN ALONG NOW, GOODBYE, PEEWEE!
6

GET CRIME DOES NOT PAY". SHOW IT TO DAD, HE'LL LOVE IT!

MASTER JOCK, THAT WAS A VERY GOOD ACCOUNT YOU GAVE OF YOURSELF! YOUR FATHER WOULD BE PROUD OF YOU!!
THANK YOU, WILLIAM. BUT MEETING PEEWEE ONLY MADE ME MORE LONESOME THAN I WAS! WHY CAN'T I HAVE KID FRIENDS LIKE EVERYONE ELSE DOES.
PERHAPS AFTER LUNCH IF I CAN GET DAD'S PERMISSION, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO GO BACK AND VISIT PEEWEE.
HIYA, JOCK, OL' SOCK! YA DIDN'T THINK I'D LET YA LEAVE WITHOUT REALLY THANKIN' YA?
PEEWEE!! IT'S NEEDLESS TO SAY NOW SURPRISED I AM.
I TOLD THE BUTLER TO BRING OUR LUNCH IN THE BARN. YOU DON'T MIND DO YOU, PEEWEE?
NAW. I DON'T KNOW HOW TA EAT IN A RITZY JOINT LIKE YOUR DUMP ANY-HOW.
IT'S JUST THAT IT'S MUCH COZIER THAN OUR BIG DINING ROOM.
WOW! WHAT GRUB. GOT ANYTHING TO SQUAT ON?
PEEWEE!! OUR LUNCH HAS DISAPPEARED
HEY!! YA GOT A HORSE IN HERE OR SOMETHIN'?

HELP WIN THE WAR, BUY DEFENSE STAMPS NOW!

NOBODY'S OUTSIDE! NOBODY'S INSIDE!! MAYBE ITS SPIRITS!
WHOEVER IT WAS, MUST STILL BE HERE IN BARN.!!
SO!! A COUPLA' FUGITIVES FROM JUSTICE!!
HEY, JOCK, LOOK WHAT I FOUND IN THIS BOX .!!
HIYA, GOT SOME KETSUP.!
YEAH, AN' SOMETHIN' TO WASH THIS MONKEY FOOD DOWN WITH?
?
ROGER.! BRING SOME MORE PICKLES AND ICE CREAM.!
AN' SOME MORE MILK TOO.. ALSO MORE BANANAS AN' TOOTH-PICKS.!
I AIN'T EVER HAD THIS MUCH FOOD EVEN AT CHRISTMAS.!
YOU SHORE DO LIVE IN STYLE! GOSH, WHAT'RE WE GONNA HAVE FO DEESERT?
3

BE LIKE DAREDEVIL, ALWAYS ON THE LEVEL!

GEE! YOU'VE BEEN SWELL! BUT I GUESS I BETTER BE MOVIN' ALONG! BUT I WISH I KNEW WHERE TO!
ME TOO! MAY BE SOMEONE WILL WANT TO HIRE A STRONG BUT DUMB KID!
ME FOK THIS! HOW ABOUT WALKIN' OFF THAT CHOW!!
PLEASE DON'T GO!! YOU CAN STAY HERE AS LONG AS YOU WISH

WHAT'LL YOUR FATHER SAY IF HE FINDS OUT WE'RE STAYIN' IN TH' BARN!
I'M SURE HE'LL LET YOU STAY WHEN HE FINDS OUT HOW HAPPY IT WOULD MAKE ME!

STICK TO COMIC HOUSE MAGAZINES, THEY'RE WHAT YOU WANT!

WELL, I'LL BE A MONKEY'S UNCLE. HEY, SEE IF YOU GUYS SEE WHAT I SEE?
?
?
LITTLE WISE GUYS, EH? DON'T YOU KNOW BETTER THAN FLIRTING WITH A BULL?
WOULD YOU LET ME THROW YOUR BOOMERANG JUST ONCE PLEASE, DAREDEVIL
I'LL DO BETTER THAN THAT. GET SOME WOOD AND I'LL MAKE YOU ALL A BOOMERANG.
GOSH! YOU'RE REAL ALRIGHT. I CAN FEEL YOU.
HEY, WAIT FER ME. I SAW 'IM FIRST.
OWW! SPIKES
WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING A FELLER CAN HAVE, DAREDEVIL?
COURAGE. LOOK AT HOW PEOPLE TODAY ARE DYING BY THE THOUSANDS AND WON'T GO TO A DOCTOR BECAUSE A FEW NAZI DOCS ARE CREATING FEAR AMONG ALL AMERICANS. IF MORE PEOPLE HAD COURAGE, WE COULD WEED 'EM OUT. OF COURSE, PEOPLE SOMETIMES USE COURAGE THE WRONG WAY.
LIKE THIS CHAP I'M TRAILING NOW. HE KILLED A DOCTOR! I THINK HE WAS DOING RIGHT.
BOW WOW WOOF WUFF BOW WOW
NOW, A POSSE IS AFTER HIM AND IF THEY CATCH 'IM BEFORE I DO, THEY'LL LYNCH HIM. HEAR THOSE BLOODHOUNDS? THAT'S THEM.

HELP COMBAT CROOKS, READ "CRIME DOES NOT PAY"!

BOW! WOW
BOW! WOW! WOW!
BOW! WOW! WOW!
WOW! WOW!
SO LONG FOR NOW! I'LL COME BACK AND FINISH YOUR BOOMERANG SOME OTHER TIME, SCARECROW!
WHAT DO YOU SAY FELLERS? LET'S FOLLOW 'IM!
WE MAY BE OF SOME ASSISTANCE TO DAREDEVIL!!
HEY WAIT UP FER ME!!
WHY DIDN'T SOMEONE THINK TO BRING SOME TEAR GUS BOMBS!!
HE CAN'T STAY UP THERE FOREVER! WHEN HE COMES DOWN, THE ROPE IS ALL READY FOR HIM!
DAREDEVIL, HUH? WELL, YOU BETTER KEEP YOUR DISTANCE IF YOU DON'T WANNA GET HURT!
NEVER MIND ABOUT ME! I'M GOING UP AND TALK TO THAT FELLOW!
HOLD YOUR FIRE, EVERYBODY!! DAREDEVIL'S GOING UP!
PUT IT AWAY, RICHAL! YOU WON'T NEED THE GUN! I JUST WANT TO HEAR YOUR SIDE OF THE STORY!
DAREDEVIL I'M WARNIN' YOU, DON'T COME A STEP CLOSER OR I'M LETTIN' YOU HAVE IT!
I'M COMIN' IN! IF YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT, YOU WON'T NEED THAT GUN, AN' I THINK I'M ON YOUR SIDE!!

HAVE YOU READ THE LATEST BOY COMICS YET—GET IT TODAY!

YOU'RE NOT PULLING ANY TRICKS ON ME! I'M WARNING YOU! GET OUT!!
USE YOUR HEAD, MAN!
I...I CAN'T!! I CAN'T SHOOT YOU! I KILLED ONE MAN, BUT HE WAS A RAT!! HE KILLED MY WIFE! I KNOW HE DID!!
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, AND LET'S GET THIS STORY STRAIGHT!!
THE DOC WAS ALWAYS A NAZI SYMPATHIZER EVEN BEFORE THE WAR! I SUSPECTED HIM OF BELONGING TO THAT GERMAN-AMERICAN DEATH CULT, BUT WE KNEW HIM SO MANY YEARS I DIDN'T THINK HE WOULD HARM MY WIFE! SHE ONLY HAD A COLD WHEN SHE WENT TO SEE HIM! HE PUNCTURED HER LUNG AND SAID SHE DIED OF T.B.!
THAT'S A PRETTY ANGRY MOB DOWN THERE SO DON'T LET 'EM GET THEIR HANDS ON YOU! STAY IN THIS CAVE TILL I COME BACK AND CLEAR YOU!
I'LL HOLD OFF AS LONG AS I CAN!! HURRY, WILL YOU!!
LOOK AT THOSE KIDS PEEKING OVER THOSE ROCKS!!
HEY, LITTLE WISE GUYS! OVER HERE!
WHAT HAPPENED, DAREDEVIL? THOUGHT YOU WERE BRINGING RICHAL DOWN! HA, HA!!
I HAVE TO HAVE QUICK ACTION IF I WANT TO SAVE A MAN'S LIFE! THERE'S A MEMBERSHIP LIST SOMEWHERE IN THIS TOWN THAT WILL CLEAR HIM! I NEED THE HELP OF A COUPLE OF COURAGEOUS KIDS! ALL THOSE WILLING SAY AYE!
AYE!
AYE!
TWO AYES!
DITTO!
THE LITTLE WISE GUYS TAKE TURNS AT BATING A CLUE FOR DAREDEVIL TO WORK ON...
IT'S YOUR TURN, SCARECROW! LET ME HEAR EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO DO!
I GO IN AN' SAY I HAVE AN EARACHE AN' IF HE TRIES TO USE ANYTHIN' BUT A LITTLE FLASHLIGHT I RUN LIKE H... AND CALL HIM A GERMAN AGENT KILLER!!
DR. HANN
THIS MUST BE ONE! EVEN HIS NAME SPELLS NAZI BACKWARDS!
HELLO! I HAVE AN AWFUL EARACHE AND IT HURTS!
COME IN, COME IN, MY BOY!! I'LL FIX IT SO IT WON'T EVER HURT AGAIN!
THAT'S NO FLASHLIGHT!! THAT'S A NEEDLE! YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE G.A. DOCTOR KILLERS!!
COME BACK! I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU! COME BACK, YOU BRAT!!
12

ALL THE THRILLS OF TEN MAGAZINES IN "CRIME DOES NOT PAY"!

HE CAME AT ME WITH A NEEDLE THAT LONG!
YOU'RE A GENIUS, SCARECROW! HE'S ONE OF THEM! YOU KIDS STAY IN THIS ALLEY AND WAIT FOR ME!
I SENT THE BOYS AFTER THAT KID!! BUT I SEE THERE'S A COUPLE MORE OF 'EM DOWN IN THE ALLEY!
NO GUN PLAY! WE HAVE OTHER INSTRUMENTS WE CAN USE! HOLD 'EM HERE! I MUST GO TO THE MEETING RIGHT AWAY!!
OHHH DAREDEVIL!
DAREDEVIL SAID WE SHOULD HAVE COURAGE! HE IS RIGHT!
WHAT'VE WE GOT BOOMERANGS FOR?
YIPPEEE!
TO THROW 'EM AT THE RATZIS!
LET 'EM HAVE IT, GANG!
UGH

CRIME BUSTER'S MONKEY SEES EVIL, HEARS EVIL, AND HATES EVIL!

THAT DOC'S LEAVING! I SHOULD FOLLOW HIM BUT THOSE KIDS WILL GET HURT! I CAN'T LEAVE THEM AT THOSE KILLERS' MERCY!
BRING HIM AROUND AGAIN, SCARE-CROW!
I'M GETTIN' A LITTLE DIZZY!
HI'YA, DAREDEVIL, WANNA DO SOME PUNCHIN'?
HI, WISE GUYS! I SEE YOU DON'T NEED ANY HELP! WELL.. HAVE FUN AND I'LL MEET YOU HERE LATER!!
HE WENT INTO THAT HOUSE..HMMM.. MORE CUSTOMERS! MUST BE A MEETING OF SOME KIND!
WELL!! LET MY HAIR DOWN AND CALL ME VERONICA!!
FELLOW-MEMBERS OF THE GERMAN-AMERICAN CULT, YOU ARE SWORN TO EXTERMINATE THE DEMOCRATIC WEAKLINGS ONE BY ONE! THE WIZARD WILL BE HERE MOMENTARILY! THEN WE SHALL GET ON WITH OUR REPORTS!

GET "CRIME DOES NOT PAY". SHOW IT TO DAD, HE'LL LOVE IT!

HEIL WIZARD!! WE ARE READY TO GIVE OUR REPORTS!
HEIL WIZARD
HEIL WIZARD
TO HEIL WITH HITLER! I SHALL TAKE THE FLOOR!!
MY PAPERS WILL PROVE HOW MANY SWINE I HAVE MAIMED OR EXTERMINATED!!
WE'VE HAD A GREAT DEAL OFF SUCCESS IN OUR ENDEAVOR TO UNDERMINE THE SOFT DEMOCRATS! HITLER, PERSONALLY IS PROUD OF US, BUT WE MUST ACCEPT THE BAD NEWS WITH THE GOOD!!
I HOPE I'M CALLED ON TO TELL HOW MANY PEOPLE I CRIPPLED!
YOU MUST TAKE THIS NEWS CALMLY! WE HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED!! WE WILL LEAVE IMMEDIATELY!
YOU WILL TAKE NO LUGGAGE, BUT BRING ALL YOUR IMPORTANT PAPERS! WE WILL ALL MEET AT FLUSHING AND SAND STREETS IN BROOKLYN! A BOAT WILL BE WAITING TO TAKE US TO A SUB! YOU HAVE LESS THAN AN HOUR TO MAKE IT!!
FROM NOW ON IT'S EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF! OUR NEXT MEETING WILL BE IN THE FATHERLAND! REMEMBER FLUSHING AND SAND STREETS, BROOKLYN!!
WELL MEN, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? LET'S GO!!
GOOD! THIS GUY IS STILL OUT! I WAS AFRAID HE'D COME TO BEFORE I FINISHED TELLING THOSE LITTLE WHITE LIES!!
IN THE MEANTIME...
COME ON, MEN!! IF WE'RE EVER GONNA GET RICHEL, WE'LL HAVE TO RUSH 'IM!
YEAH! I GOTTA GET HOME TO DINNER SOMETIME!
IT'S ABOUT TIME! LET'S GET HIM!!

HELP COMBAT CROOKS, READ 'CRIME DOES NOT PAY'!

HE SURE GAVE US A BATTLE!
DON'T STEVE! THEY'LL BE NUTHIN' LEFT OF HIM TO HANG!
FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO!
YOU KILLED DOC BROWN! HE BROUGHT ME INTO THIS WORLD!! YOU RAT!!
EASY ON HIM, STEVIE! SAVE SOME OF HIM FOR US!
LET'S HANG HIM TO DOC BROWN'S ELM TREE!
SAND STREET AND FLUSHING AVENUE IS THE BROOKLYN NAVY YARD! WE'VE BEEN TRICKED!!
BROOKLYN NAVY YARD
OKAY, BOYS! THESE ARE THE RATS I WAS TELLING YOU ABOUT! NOW DO YOUR STUFF!
DO YOU WANT 'EM ONE AT A TIME OR ALL AT ONCE!
AN' IN ONE PIECE OR LOTSA' PIECES?
THERE'LL BE A HOT TIME IN THE OLD TOWN TONIGHT!

HERR IZAN! YOU ARE GOING TO BE MY SPECIAL LITTLE PACKAGE!
BOY, JUST WHAT I'VE BEEN WAITIN' FOR...A LITTLE ACTION!
2, 4, 6, 8, WHO DO WE HATE? HITLER!
I THOUGHT YOU NAZIS WERE TOUGH! NOT MUCH FUN TO LOOK FORWARD TO OVER THERE!
AFF
AFF

STICK TO COMIC HOUSE MAGAZINES, THEY'RE WHAT YOU WANT!

WHAT A SWELL BUNCH OF GOBS THIS MAN'S NAVY HAS! MAY BE I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT THE KIDS! I'D NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO 'EM!
AND TO THINK I WAS WORRYING ABOUT YOU LITTLE WISE GUYS!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HIYA, DAREDEVIL, WHAT'S COOKIN' BY YOU?
NICE GOING, WISE GUYS! YOU KIDS CAN WORK WITH ME ANYTIME! WE MUST GET TO THAT POSSE! I'VE GOT SOME PROOF THAT WILL SAVE RICHAL!
BOY, O' BOY,... DO YA MEAN IT, DAREDEVIL?
GOSH, I GUESS I'M NOT SO DUMB AFTER ALL...
HEAR THAT? THAT'S THEM! IF THEY'VE LYNCHED HIM, I'LL HAVE THEM ALL PROSECUTED! THEY'VE PROBABLY GOT THE NOOSE AROUND 'IM ALREADY!
HEY FELLERS, WAIT UP PER ME!
SAY, DON'T THEY KNOW LYNCHIN' IS AGAINST TH' LAW?
YOU SHOULD BE THANKFUL IT'S GONNA BE FAST, RICHAL! YOU DESERVE A SLOW DEATH!
BE SURE YA GOT HIS HANDS TIED GOOD!
OKAY! SHOVE HIM OFF ANY TIME YER READY!
13

THE BEST COMIC BOOKS FOR YOU, DAREDEVIL, BOY, AND CRIME DOES NOT PAY!

OKAY, RICHAL, START PRAYING!
HURRY AN' LET 'IM GO! DAREDEVIL'S COMING! HE'LL TRY TO STOP US!
WAIT! STOP!
DAREDEVIL!! WE DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE WITH YOU! HE WAS GUILTY AND WE JUST SAVED THE STATE SOME MONEY!
GUILTY EH? WELL, HERE'S PROOF HE WASN'T!! DOC BROWN WAS A NAZI AGENT WHO KILLED RICHAL'S WIFE AND MURDERED AND CRIPPLED MANY OTHER AMERICANS!
RICHAL ONLY DID WHAT ANY ONE OF US SHOULD HAVE DONE! I HOPE YOU'RE ALL PROUD OF YOURSELVES, TAKING THE LAW INTO YOUR OWN HANDS AND LYNCHING A MAN WHOM ANY FOREIGN COURT IN THE WORLD WOULD JUDGE GUILTY! WHAT KIND OF AMERICANS ARE YOU? WHERE'S YOUR SENSE OF FAIR PLAY?
THAT'S WHAT I WAS TRYING TO TELL 'EM DAREDEVIL!!
?
HURRY AN' GET ME LOOSE! THIS SHOE LACE IS GONNA GIVE ANY SECOND!
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D OWE MY LIFE TO A SHOE LACE, BUT MOST OF ALL I HAVE YOU TO THANK,
YOU'LL HAVE TO STAND TRIAL, BUT YOU'LL BE ACQUITTED AND THEY'LL PROBABLY PIN A MEDAL ON YOU!
WELL, LITTLE WISE GUYS, SUPPOSE WE GO BACK AND FINISH MAKING THAT BOOMERANG FOR SCARECROW!!
HEY, WAIT UP FER ME!

HAVE YOU READ THE LATEST BOY COMICS YET—GET IT TODAY!

FREE! THE ORIGINAL OF THIS DRAWING!
WHICH IS TWICE THIS SIZE AND BEAUTIFULLY HAND COLORED! IS YOURS — IF YOU WRITE THE BEST LETTER TELLING ME WHETHER YOU LIKED MY STRIP BETTER BEFORE OR AFTER THE "LITTLE WISE GUYS" GOT INTO IT — AND GIVE YOUR REASONS
RULES:- ALL ENTRIES MUST MAILED TO:- DAREDEVIL, COMIC HOUSE, INC. 114 EAST 52ND ST. NEW YORK CITY ON OR BEFORE SEPT. 21, 1942. IN CASE OF TIES, DUPLICATE PRIZES WILL BE AWARDED THE EDITORS WILL BE THE SOLE JUDGES AND THEIR DECISON WILL BE FINAL.
Yours till Hitler scuttles himself!
Good Luck forever-
Daredevil and the four little wise guys, Peewee, Scarecrow, Meatball and Jocko!
EAGLE BIRD

THE OTHER WORLD OF

WALT KELLY

His full name was Walter Crawford Kelly Jr. He was born in Philadelphia in 1913, and died of complications of diabetes in 1973. He left the world a well-known legacy in the field of political commentary - especially political commentary in comic-strip form - and led the way for such current comic strips as *Doonesbury* and *Bloom County*. That and his liberal viewpoint as expressed in *Pogo* are public knowledge.

What is known only to a small number of collectors is the **other** world of Walt Kelly, the four-color world he created for children in the 1940's. Pogo's stories were a small part of that world, it's true - but they were distinct from the body of his work at that time; a delightful view of a southern swamp he had never seen. But, as the Okefenokee is only a tiny part of the United States, so Pogo and his friends were only a few of the countless citizens of Kelly's Kingdom.

Kelly left most of those citizens behind when he took *Pogo* to the New York *Star*, in the first step on the way to syndication. A few faithful fans remembered his other work and continued to treasure what remained of it - to be found only in second-hand shops. But Kelly himself never seemed overly solicitous of his early creations. Since he did not keep file copies for himself, much of what he did was preserved only by hard-core collectors in an anarchic world of comics buffs. Infact, one entire series of Kelly's comics remains almost wholly unavailable to this day. It is our guess that no more than twenty-five copies of each issue of *The Adventures of Peter Wheat* survive in **any** condition into the 1980's. We say this not to drive up the cost of what remains but to ask you to share in our rejoicing that some of this virtually vanished material is finally being reprinted for the first time. (Remember, Peter Wheat stories were available only to families whose bread man carried the line of Peter Wheat baked goods; we don't know how far the Bakers Associates, Inc., line extended, but we don't recall seeing it in our parts of the country.)

At last, more and more Kelly work is becoming available to collectors who will no longer have to pay high prices to see material that has been out of print for three decades. The excellent Bill Crouch, with the invaluable help of Kelly's widow, Selby, has embarked on reprints of material even more rare than *The Adventures of Peter Wheat*. We have our fingers crossed that eventually even such legally complicated strips as Kelly's "Our Gang" will be reprinted for new generations of children.

In this issue of *The Golden Age of Comics*, we bring you a look at two different examples of Kelly's comics for children: Kelly's Nibble, the mouse, and Kelly's swords-and-sorcery hero, Peter Wheat. Betsy Curtis gives you background on Nibble; we'll fill you in a bit on Peter Wheat.

In the first nationally available publication of Peter Wheat, we are presenting the first two stories about the "small folk" of the wheat field. Little is known about the strip's origins; Peter's character design as shown on the opening and closing pages is done by Kelly, but that does not mean he actually did the model sheets (if any were done) for the character. How long had the bread been on the market by the time the first issue appeared in 1948? We just don't know.

We assume that Western Printing asked Kelly to handle the comic as part of his work for the line. How much background material was he given? The answer is lost. Was he given the concept of little people who guard a wheat field to preserve its crop from destruction by natural forces or hornets who wanted the field for themselves? Whatever the background might have been, the script bore Kelly's touch.

The heroes you see in these two stories were those maintained throughout Kelly's tenure on the strip: Peter, Beetle, and Sammy Sweet. The villains are memorable (note the marvelous character design of the menacing hornet knights), Dragonel (the queen of the hornets - and not a little reminiscent of Milton Caniff's Dragon Lady) and the Wizard (her father, never referred to as the **king**, even in later installments, after Dragonel forsakes the role of antagonist and leaves the Wizard to join Peter in protecting the wheat field).

As with much of Kelly's comic-book work, the art looks hurried, almost like roughs in some cases. The plotting is not hurried, however, and the careful choreographing of conflict exhibits a skill that would do credit to writers and artists of straight adventure stories. Kelly was known to complain about violence in children's comics - but he created some of the most memorable sequences of violence in comics. The difference is that Kelly opted for the least violence necessary to resolve a situation and used violence carefully and well.

Nibble, A Walt Kelly Mouse

By Betsy Curtis

"...'and what is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?' " That is the conclusion of the first paragraph of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Parents who grew up on *Alice* themselves welcomed *Animal Comics* and other comic books of the 1940's and '50's, which were put together primarily for them to read to their own children. Comic books are almost nothing but pictures and conversations. And *Animal Comics* (I have just finished re-reading twenty-eight of the thirty issues printed) is one of the very best.

Six-page strips about the mouse, Nibble, appeared in the last three of those issues. They make a fine example of the best of the genre.

I trust that future issues of *The Golden Age of Comics* will contain articles not only about the other Kelly work in *Animal Comics*--the early "Albert" stories, "Goozy" (short for Pop *Goozy* Weasel), and the numerous strips in various issues where Walt stood in for other scripters and artists--but also about the work of Dan Noonan and Morris Gollub and others who made the last ten issues so outstanding.

Even the most observant (and even scholarly) parent would have been unlikely to have put together consciously, from internal evidence, how much he/she knew about Walt Kelly and what to expect in "Nibble and Nubble" before, say, *Animal Comics* No. 24 (December 1946 - January 1947). That was the first time that Walt was permitted to sign his name to the "Pogo" strip; though his work had appeared unsigned in every previous issue and he had done other strips besides "Albert," plus most of the covers both front and back. But the observant parent might have noticed some sort of familiar tone by issues No. 16 and No. 17, in which the majority of regular features were Kelly scripts and at least pencilled by him. The frequent reader (like me, every night till a new comic replaced the preceding one) would surely have come to recognize in Albert's creator the joys of alliteration (Perspicacity Possum and her young, Porridge and Paradox), joys of dialect (not only "s'uth'n" but hepcat), joys of pun (in "Noah Count Ark," Cap'n Churchy La Femme and his pirate skiff, The Jelly Rajah), and his awareness of politics (No. 5, "Land of livin'! The gov'mint sure messes things up these days!").

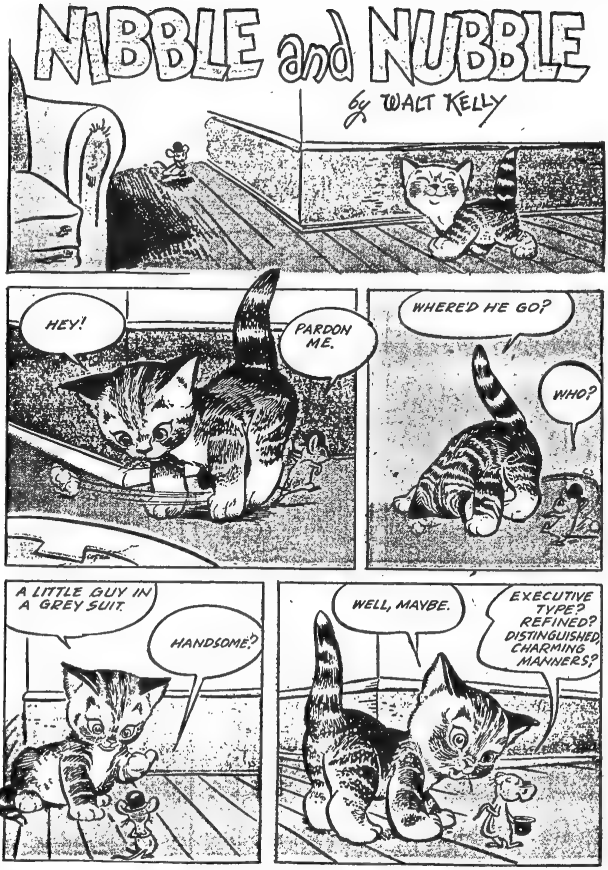
The parent-reader would know somebody's expressed affection for alligators and pirates and other potential predators who serve the exigencies of plot willy-nilly. That lucky grownup might expect a wealth of action gags requiring no words, having gone through the back-page panels with the fascinated "child" doing the explaining of the action.

But, beginning with issue No. 24, one originator of conversation-plus-pictures is at last known to the reader by name. That reader would come to expect Kelly's understanding of a child's confusion about words (in the swampland search for "nature's nobles' screechers"--i.e., creatures) and a child's problem of learning to become "cultured and refined." Walt demonstrated his own culture and "re-finement" mentioning such works as "The Ruby Eyes of Homer Kayak," and quoting from it about "Pair o' Dice Enow" and describing a quarrelling duo as "they seein' eye to eye and toof to toof."

I was the lucky parent at this time whose four-and-a-half-year-old child came home from the neighboring newsstand with the Dell Special No. 148--all Kelly, all swampland--thanks to an extra dime, gift of an indulgent grandmother. It was I who had been hooked from at least *Animal Comics* No. 22 in 1946. Kelly's pretend-swearing in it gave me acceptable substitues for the profanity my child was picking up from her harassed mother. I was prepared to be charmed by Kelly's appearance in issue No. 28 with "Nibble and Nubble."

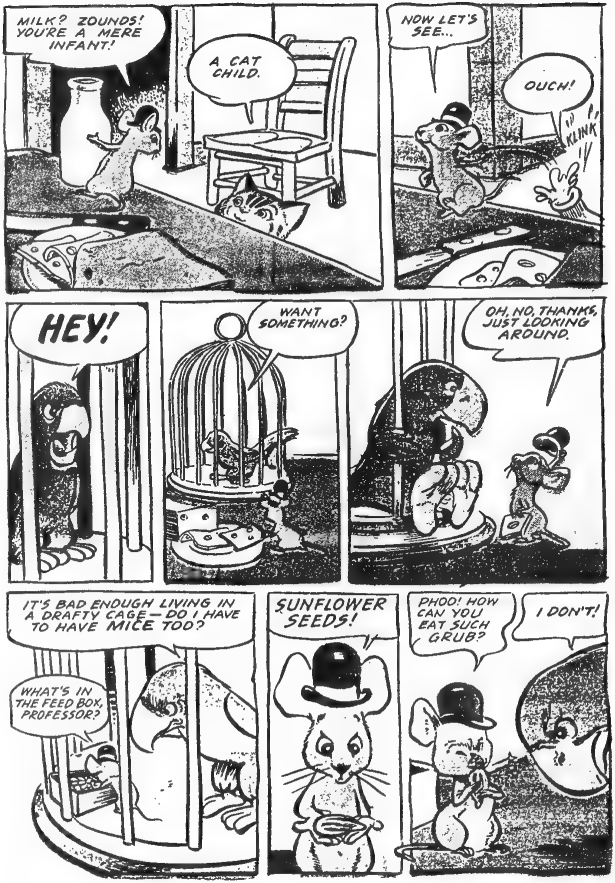
In issues No. 28 and No. 29, the strip was so titled. In issue No. 30, the final episode was simply headed "Nibble" and did not involve the cat child. All three were signed by Walt Kelly.

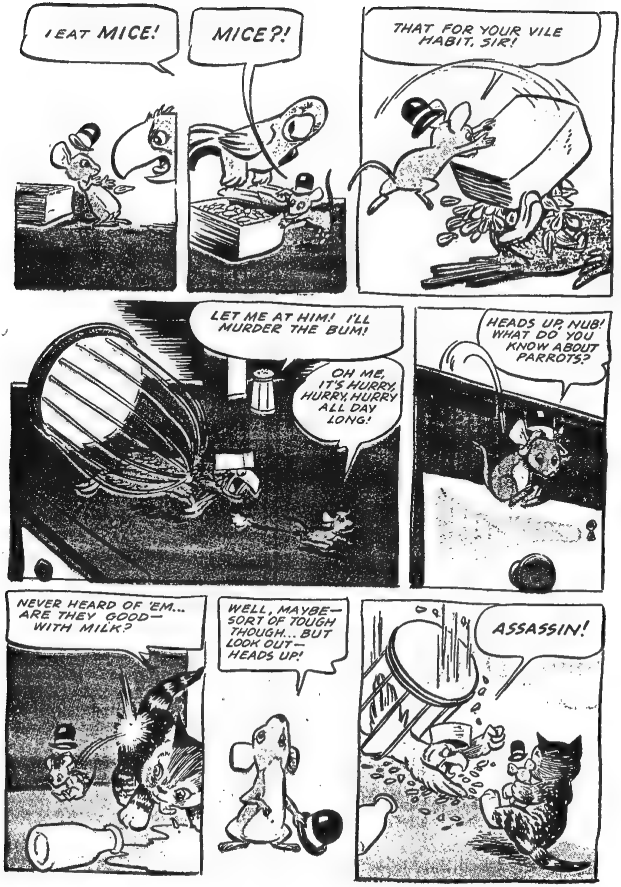
From the first, full-page-wide, signed panel, the readers' and young watcher's attentions are focused on Nibble. The first page introduces this mouse-sized, mouse-bodied (though bipedal and prehensile) hero Nibble in his meeting with Nubble, the furriest, most really-kitten in comic book history. (Although in issue No. 1 in "Muggsy and Ginger" and in No. 4 in "Dinky," Walt had shown that he could draw furry kittens.) And you'll find the other chief character, the bilingual parrot (speaking both 'animal' and 'human') by the third page.



Animal Comics #28 (August - September 1947), copyright 1947 by Oskar Lebeck.

I'M JUST A BRAND-NEW CAT NAMED NUBBLE AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT THOSE WORDS MEAN.
THOSE WORDS MEAN ME! NIBBLE, A GENTLEMAN OF DISTINCTION.
ARE YOU A CAT, TOO?
HUH?!
A CAT? HAW! YOU CAN'T MEAN IT, MY GOOD FELLOW-HAW! A CAT INDEED!
MY BOY, I'M A MOUSE! ONE NIBBLE, BY NAME.
A MOUSE?! MOTHER SAID SOMETHING ABOUT MICE— WHAT WAS IT?
SOMETHING COMPLIMENTARY, NO DOUBT! WHEN LITTLE CATS ARE GOOD, THEY GROW UP TO BE MICE... HERE, GIVE ME A BOOST.
NEVER WAS ABLE TO GET UP HERE BEFORE.
STICK AROUND, MY BOY.. UH-DO YOU LIKE JAM OR DRIED BEANS?
I LIKE MILK, NIBBLE.


MILK? ZOUNDS! YOU'RE A MERE INFANT!
A CAT CHILD.
NOW LET'S SEE...
OUCH!
KLINK!!
HEY!
WANT SOMETHING?
OH, NO, THANKS, JUST LOOKING AROUND.
IT'S BAD ENOUGH LIVING IN A DRAFTY CAGE—DO I HAVE TO HAVE MICE TOO?
WHAT'S IN THE FEED BOX, PROFESSOR?
SUNFLOWER SEEDS!
PHOO! HOW CAN YOU EAT SUCH GRUB?
I DON'T!


I EAT MICE!
MICE?!
THAT FOR YOUR VILE HABIT, SIR!
LET ME AT HIM! I'LL MURDER THE BUM!
OH ME, IT'S HURRY, HURRY, HURRY ALL DAY LONG!
HEADS UP, NUB! WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARROTS?
NEVER HEARD OF 'EM... ARE THEY GOOD— WITH MILK?
WELL, MAYBE— SORT OF TOUGH THOUGH... BUT LOOK OUT— HEADS UP!
ASSASSIN!

YOU MUST BE THE PARROT!
AND YOU'RE A CAT!! WHY AREN'T YOU BUSY EATING THAT MOUSE?
TUT, TUT! WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN.
I DON'T WANT TO START ANYTHING, BUT SOME CATS EAT BIRDS!
WHAT A WAY TO RUN A HOUSE— MICE ALL OVER THE PLACE— CATS LAZY AS PIGS!
WE'VE HEARD ENOUGH—WE'LL BE GOING, NUBBY, MY BOY.
WHAT'S ALL THE RUCKUS?
HIDE IN THE CLOSET, NUB— LOOK WHO'S COMING!
THE BOSS!
SO HELP ME, THESE TWO CHARACTERS... BLA-BLA—
FUSS FEATHERS IS BENDING HIS EAR WITH A LOAD OF ALIBIS.

OH, KEEP QUIET, YOU OLD WINDBAG... YOU SPILLED THAT MILK. SO DON'T TRY TO BLAME SOMEONE ELSE.
IMAGINE THAT PARROT TRYING TO ACCUSE A MOUSE OF MAKING THAT MESS.
OH, HELLO THERE, KITTY! YOU HAVEN'T SEEN A PESKY MOUSE AROUND, HAVE YOU?
MEOW!
CAN'T AFFORD MICE, YOU KNOW— WHO'S THAT BEHIND YOU?
MEOW!
NEVER SAW SUCH A SMALL CAT—ESPECIALLY IN A DERBY.
HE THOUGHT YOU WERE A CAT.
AH YES, SOME PEOPLE EVEN MISTAKE ME FOR A FAMOUS CINEMA PERSONALITY.
WELL, I'D BETTER GET BACK TO THE BASKET.
MY REGARDS TO THE MATER, OLD CHAP... HOPE TO BE SEEING HER SOON—BEFORE SHE SEES ME, OF COURSE— TOODLE-OO!

The first "Nibble" story includes the traditional plot feature of talking-animal stories--"traditional" not only in movie cartoon comedies of this century but also from creators as long ago as Aesop and Origan through Chaucer and Joel Chandler Harris. I'd call this predator-prey relationship "the cannibal theme," since it involves the intention of one sentient being to eat another sentient being. It appeared in earlier issues of *Animal Comics* in strips such as "Blackie" and "Cilly Goose" and Howard R. Garis's "Uncle Wiggily." In "Nibble," it is gently changed. Nibble is knowledgable about cats but less so about parrots and seems understandably horrified by the parrot's shouted "I eat *mice*!" The listening child need feel no such horror, knowing from "little cats grow up to be mice" that it's all in fun.

The listening, looking child ... and the reading-aloud parent.

Animal Comics (like *Fairy Tale Parade, Raggedy Ann,* and *Our Gang* produced by Western Printing and distributed by Dell in the Forties and early Fifties) presupposed (and in fact required) a culture pattern much diminished over the TV-filled next three decades. It consisted of a parent reading aloud frequently to one or more small children who sat close enough beside the reader to see the pictures. These pictures often accompanied an adult vocabulary. When Nubble said, " ... and I don't know what those words mean," the parent could explain "executive type," "refined," etc., giving the child a delicious grown-up feeling of knowing more than a cat-child. It's a cuddly and almost vanished pattern.

Not only was the reading parent taken for granted, but most of the talk in *Animal Comics* (especially in the Kelly strips) was on two levels, as were the plot complications--fun for grownups as well as for children. (This double level was one of the reasons I started fan letters in 1947 to Walt that resulted in fascinating correspondence and our two visits to the Kellys.) Perhaps, sometimes this double level is more sophisticated than the reader realizes till the second or third time through.

For instance, one of the unexpected aspects of reading "Nibble" aloud is a specialized accent. Few of us would have pre-read "Nibble" to discover that he speaks with a (fake?) upperclass British accent in this first strip (which closes with, "My regards to the mater, old chap ... hope to be seeing her soon--before she sees me, of course--toodle-oo!") or to find that the dog (who appears only in the final three pages of the last episode) has a Cockney accent (although his first remark is "Blimey!").

Only Walt Kelly and Dan Noonan (whose penguin in the "Egbert Elephant" stories also used a British speech-pattern) used specialized accent and dialect in comics for young children, to the best of my knowledge. We brought a recorder on our second visit to Walt and asked him to read some Pogo aloud. He was reluctant, asked the listening child, "How does Pogo sound, Judy?", prefiguring his later reluctance to have swampland animations done for TV because the voices (and accents?) might not fit his or children's concepts.

The heavy "Deep South" accent, which appears in the "Albert" strip by issue No. 9 (1944) and which later diminished a bit (whose policy?) when his daily *Pogo* strip appeared, may have been one of the spin-offs of work during the war. The military was attempting to invent some system of phonetic notation which would sound the same to trainees for intelligence work. They would need to speak various European languages without a strange accent--but they came from areas as different as New England, Texas, and Pittsburgh and read phonetic symbols with their own, local vowels.

Animal Comics shows its derivations from early Disney and other studio-animated movies. Walt Kelly, Morris Gollub, and Dan Noonan had all been Disney animators. The slapstick of typical talking-animal movie shorts shows up in the second "Nibble and Nubble" episode with a chase, a mouse in pudding, creation of a new pudding of soapflakes and red pepper, and the effect on the parrot of eating it. In the third episode (Nubble's name has disappeared from the title and he's not in the story), there is still more movie-type comedy; a dog-attacking-the-refrigerator scene smacks of cartoon comedies still current in children's Saturday morning TV fare. (Incidentally, the entire third story was swiped and appeared only slightly altered in an issue of Dell's *Two Mouseketeers*.)

As in the animation field, the policy of anonymity for the artists was maintained by Western Printing and Lithographing--through its editor for children's comics, Oskar Lebeck. He copyrighted the issues in his own name except for

the Garis and Johnny Gruelle strips (copyright but not signed by Garis and Gruelle); those (with mostly anonymous artists) copyright by Famous Studios through issue No. 17; and a strip in issues No. 4, No. 5, and No. 6 by Frank Thomas (signed Rankfray Homastay, Ankfray and Bumblebrain). Issue No. 24 (the first in 1947) is the first in which Kelly signed the strip and asked for fan letters in his own name ("Wallet" Kelly); issue No. 27 has the first Gollub credit; and by No. 28 Dan Noonan is permitted to sign the *ninth* episode of his "Rover." Those last three issues (No. 28 - No. 30) are the only ones in which both script and drawing credits appear fairly fully. But who would imagine that such things might matter to children?

Comic strips intended for small children are usually slanted so that the winner (with whom the child will identify) is smaller than the opposing, hostile characters. Frequently, this small winner beats out its opponents by being smarter. But in the two stories in which Nubble appears, the kitten is the child-identity character, but the winner with the smarts is most definitely an adult, though smaller than the kitten. However, the child-listener is given the opportunity to consider Nibble a somewhat discreditable adult ("When little cats are good," he obviously prevaricates, "they grow up to be mice") and at the same time an extremely likeable one, with overtones of W. C. Fields. This is far beyond the simple, moralistic tone of many comics sequences.

The role of the real human being ("the boss") and his size relative to the animals is, perhaps, drawn from the child's viewpoint of "big people." He appears briefly at the end of the first two episodes and is about to enter at the end of the last one. His character is that of an unobservant "rationally stupid" disciplinarian, a point of view which may please the child-listener and give the adult reader a moment of thought about her/his own behavior as it may appear to the child. The boss not only assumes (falsely) that the parrot is responsible for the mess in the kitchen and is lying to save his own feathers, but also identifies Nibble as a cat. "Never saw such a small cat—especially in a derby" is delivered with a look of cheerful idiocy that will please the child, as Kelly shows the art of caricature with a minimum of line.

When "Nibble and Nubble" appeared in August 1947, the editorial policy of animal-human relationships and increasing realism (which returned suddenly at the end of 1945, in issue No. 18) was in full swing. In these issues, Noonan's "Rover" and the Gollub-drawn "Chuckwagon Charley's Tales" are real-real (even though the animals may be talking ones). "The Boss" in "Nibble" is a height of improbability, but not impossible.

The end lines of each of the three Nibble episodes lead reader and listener to imagine further action. Nibble says "You'll get a boot out of it." And you'll get a boot out of Kelly's "Nibble" stories if you can find the other two—and read them with a child.

Final pages of "Nibble" stories from Animal Comics *#28, #29 (October - November 1947), and #30 (December - January 1948), copyright 1947 by Oskar Lebeck.*

KRUG Presents The Adventures of PETER WHEAT

At the edge of the wheat field stands a tiny kingdom of peaceful little creatures.
Peter Wheat and his mother, the Queen, reign over the small country and try to protect it from its deadly enemy, the fierce Hornet Knights
Come on, Beetle, let's ride as far as the big old oak.
Fine, Peter.
Hold on, Peter!
Look, is that not Dragone, Queen of the Hornets?
Printed in U.S.A.

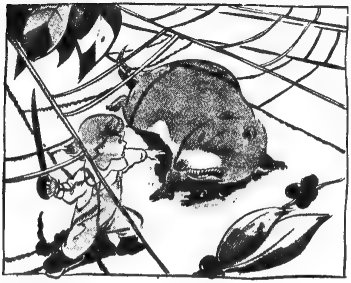
The Adventures of Peter Wheat #1, *copyright 1948 by Bakers Associates, Inc.*

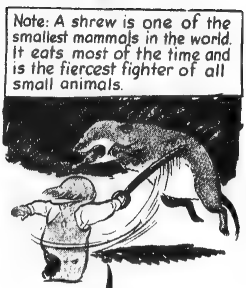
Aye. 'tis Dragona! She's talking with two of her henchmen. If we sneak close, we may overhear what wicked deed they are plotting.
See there, how huge the wheat field has become.
Aye! Soon it will crowd us out.
The Kingdom of the Hornets will soon be nothing but a wheat field. We lose everything to civilization.
Aye.
There's but one thing to do—we must burn the wheat! And woe to any who try to stop us.
Did you hear—ah-ah—ah choo!
Sh-sh-sh—if they find us, we're done for!

After them! Two of the villagers were hiding in the grass!
Run to the village, Beetle— tell them of the Hornets' plan—quickly!
I'll fool them—one will chase me now to keep their secret—and I'll ambush him.
More hornets! They've captured the mice!
I'll have to dive into the grass—the Queen and the other knight are on my heels.
Catch that beetle before he spoils our plan!

I'll make sure we get this one, anyway.
Clank!
Good! Now we've got him!
The other one got away- you must find him!
But what of Peter Wheat- we must guard him well- he's most dangerous.
I'll do it.
Fly out and find that beetle-he must not escape.
And you-Drogonel will teach Peter Wheat not to spy on her.

Our hornet fortress has many dungeons and torture chambers—you'll regret your actions, Peter.
If you burn the wheat, you, too, will regret it.
A shrew! The fiercest animal for its weight in the world!
They're always hungry—he'll try to eat us both.
I can't leave you tied up if he attacks.
Uh—what?
I don't understand—you're usually so—uh—
Cruel?—On guard, Peter Wheat—the shrew advances!
I'm caught in this spider web—help!




Note: A shrew is one of the smallest mammals in the world. It eats most of the time and is the fiercest fighter of all small animals.

Oh, he's got Peter—and I'm next!
No, not next, Queen Dragonel—the shrew's work is done.
Fly now, Peter, before my men return—you have saved my life—I owe you a favor.
Oh no, Queen, I'll not leave you to carry out your plan to destroy the wheat fields—I'll cut you down from that web as my prisoner.
Think again, Peter Wheat...
We'll take you back to the hornet castle—you should have run while you could.

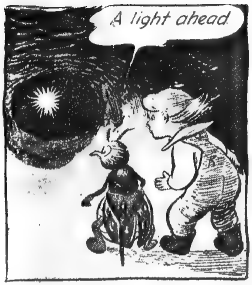
Take him directly to my father, men. We will give him a fair trial.
The Queen is here with a prisoner, Peter Wheat.
What!?
Wonderful!
Have him brought before me in the throne room.
Aye, master.
To the throne room with him!
Prostrate yourself before your betters!
Ha!

Well, Peter Wheat, so you are helpless? Suppose we chop off your head?
Nay, father, we have more important work first!
Very well! Ho, guard—throw this villain into a dungeon
If you will make fire with your wizardry, we will set fire to the wheat fields
Excellent!
Into your cell!
Locked in here, helpless! And when they've burned the wheat fields, they'll come back and chop off my head
Light from that tiny window—maybe I could squeeze through
If I could just get my hands untied—

Down on the ground, Beetle struggles through the underbush.
Phew—managed to elude them
There's the hornets' tree castle—maybe I can see the window of Peter's cell
Gosh—that looks like Beetle and he's waving.
I can sneak over to the tree beneath this leaf—the hornets won't notice me among the other leaves...
Good—no one saw me—now to climb that vine.
Hssst, Beetle—thank goodness you've come!
Brought my knife to cut your bonds

I can saw through these ropes in a jiffy
Oof—I think I can squeeze through.
Good!
That's it—sneak out on that limb. We can cross over to another tree.
Oop—look for a soft spot to jump—they see us!
See! The beetle has freed Peter—after them!
Jump into that bush, Beetle! Jump!

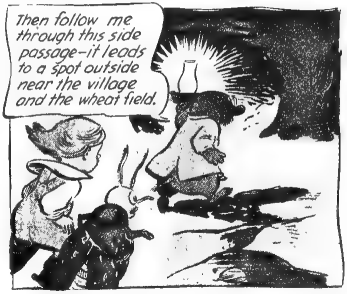
Oof—safe! Are you?
Yes—all right here.
Quick! Scramble down to the ground—there's a mole hole there we can hide in.
They disappeared into the bush.
Don't see 'em.
Here we are—dash in
Did they see us?
No—but they're searching.
Then we'd better get farther back into the mole's passage


A light ahead

Who's there?
It's the mole himself.

Peter Wheat and Beetle! What are you doing here?

We're running away from the hornets. They're planning to burn up the wheat field and we want to tell the villagers so they will stop the hornets.


Then follow me through this side passage—it leads to a spot outside near the village and the wheat field.

There you are—the coast is clear at this point!

Quickly, past the wheat field and to the village.
Look there, the hornets are at the wheat field—we're too late!
Give me your knife—I'll rush at them, pretending there's an army with me—you get to the village unseen fast as you can and bring help.
Right!
They seem to be waiting for someone—oh, I know—the Queen's father, the Grand Wizard—he's their only fire maker.
Here he comes—when he's about to start the fire, I'll rush out shouting.
All right, men, get your brands ready and when I start the fire, spread it through the wheat.

Beetle reaches the village.
To arms! To arms! The hornets are going to fire the wheat—Peter's trying to hold them off.
We'll push the hornets into the ocean!
Bumble Bee, will you get the bees to help? The hornets want to burn the wheat and we must stop them.
Aye! Hop on my back, Beetle
Meanwhile Peter attacks the hornets' fire party.
Forward, men!
Men? Where're his men?
Stop him—if those powders are spilled, we'll have no more for a long time.
You're spilling our fire powders!
He has no men!

I'll take care of you!
Cease! Look there!
Flee! They will destroy us!
Are you all right, Peter? The hornets are on the run and the wheat field is saved!
Aye, I'm all right—the wizard's fire powders are ruined—he won't make fire for a long time!
188
AND SO ENDS THE FIRST OF MANY ADVENTURES WITH THE QUEEN OF THE HORNETS

SMART way to BUY

Because the PETER WHEAT bread man brings to your door a fresher, tastier loaf

Because you like the friendly, courteous service

Because you can select the service to suit your needs best—bread only or basket service.

KRUG'S

PETER WHEAT BREAD

KRUG Presents
The Adventures of
PETER WHEAT
Near the wheat field at the edge of the wood is a tiny village of little creatures. Peter Wheat lives there and is the defender of the small folk.
Peter Wheat! We need your help!
It's a honey bee
Someone's stolen all of our honey!
COPR., 1948 BAKERS ASSOCIATES, INC. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

The Adventures of Peter Wheat #2, *copyright 1948 by Bakers Associates, Inc.*

Are you sure it's stolen?
Well, it's gone—you can see for yourself.

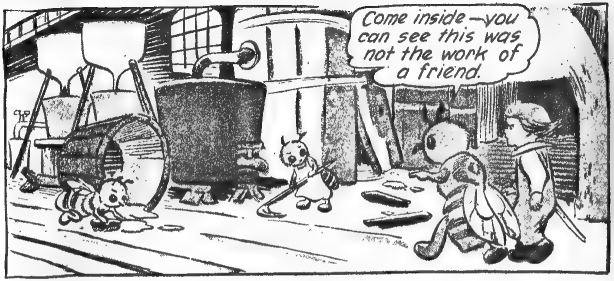
Maybe Sammy Sweet borrowed the honey.

Sammy Sweet uses lots of honey to make those nice honey buns.

Just go up into our hive—it doesn't look like Sammy borrowed the honey.

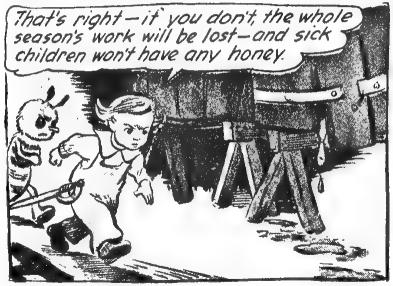
Welcome, Peter Wheat.
Hello, Bombo.

You do not find us with weapons often, Peter—I apologize.
I understand, Bombo.

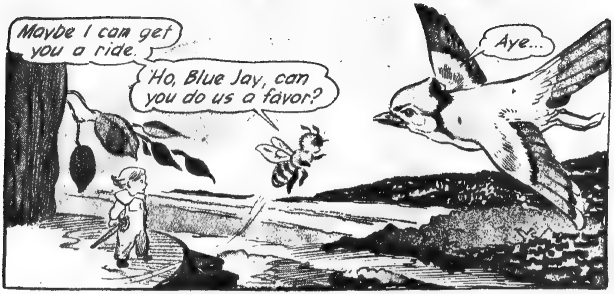

Come inside—you can see this was not the work of a friend.

Yes—I see! Vats split open, tanks overturned, tubs emptied. Why, the honey factory is a shambles!

Aye! Revenge on the culprits!
It would be better to get the honey back. The hospitals need it.

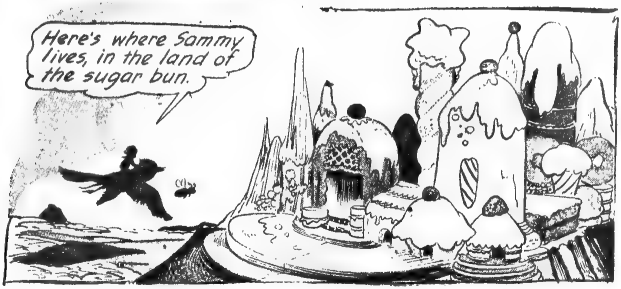

That's right—if you don't, the whole season's work will be lost—and sick children won't have any honey.

I'll go see Sammy Sweet. Maybe he has heard something of this.


Maybe I can get you a ride.
Ho, Blue Jay, can you do us a favor?
Aye...

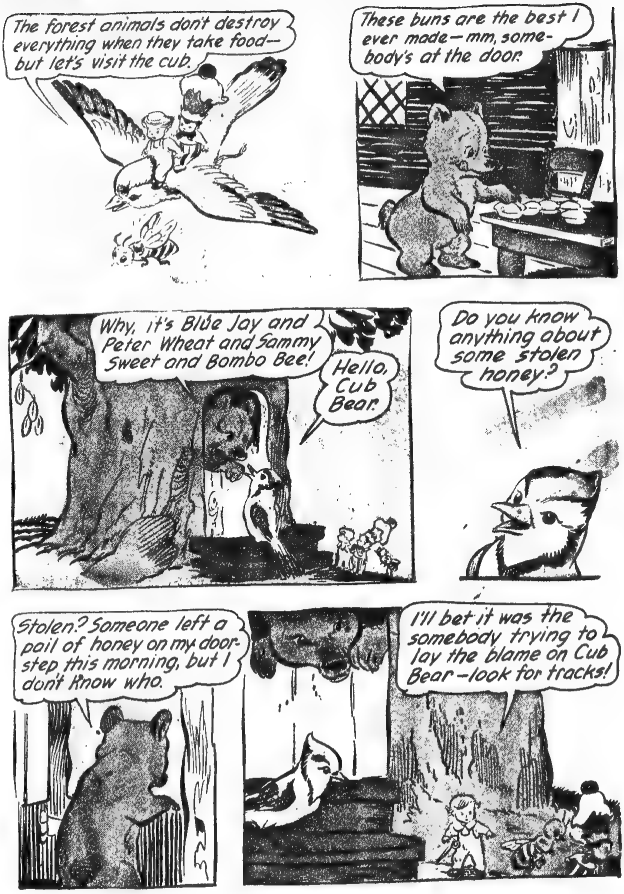
I want to get over to Sammy Sweet's real fast!
Of course— hop aboard

I know Sammy didn't take the honey, but he might know about it.


Here's where Sammy lives, in the land of the sugar bun.

Bless my soul! Here come visitors!
I must tell Sammy.
Sammy, it looks like Peter Wheat is coming.
Good! Good!
We'll prepare a royal banquet.
There will be cupcakes and eclairs and jelly rolls. And jelly doughnuts and pecan buns and...

Greetings, Sammy.
Welcome to the land of the sugar bun.
We're preparing a banquet in your honor.
But we haven't time, thanks, Sammy—We are looking for stolen honey!
Mmm—it makes my mouth water to think of it... Seems to me the bear cub said something about honey.
Yes, he did—said he didn't need any cupcakes this morning from our bakery truck. Said he was making honey buns.
Maybe that's it!


The forest animals don't destroy everything when they take food— but let's visit the cub.
These buns are the best I ever made— mm, somebody's at the door.
Why, it's Blue Jay and Peter Wheat and Sammy Sweet and Bombo Bee!
Hello, Cub Bear.
Do you know anything about some stolen honey?
Stolen? Someone left a pail of honey on my doorstep this morning, but I don't know who.
I'll bet it was the somebody trying to lay the blame on Cub Bear—look for tracks!

Look! Drops of honey!
Aye! See, they form a trail over this way.
Look sharp now...
Say— look over here!
It's the hornets and their queen, Dragonel. THEY'VE got the honey
Store the honey in our hollow tree.

We've got enough honey for all winter—and the bees will never know who took it.
Come on—let's light into them!
Nay—we'd be killed!
Blue Jay, fly over them and make fun of their honey...
Tell them you know where there is ten times as much honey—then guide them to the witch tree.
Now, Sammy and Bombo, come with me
Wonder what Peter's got in mind?

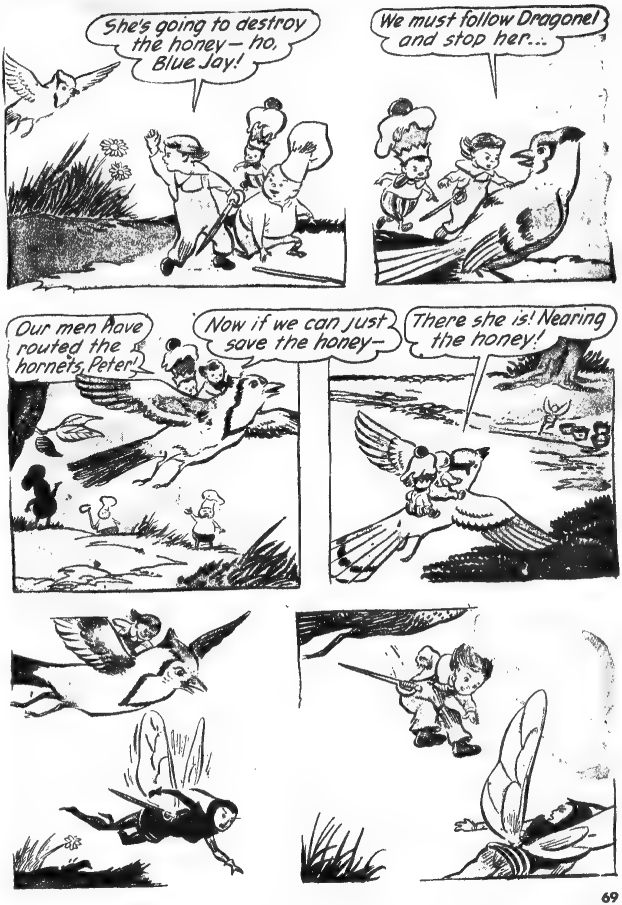
Aah—hah-hah-hah!
Ha! Thou empty head! Laugh at your betters, you dolt!
Empty head? At least I know where there is twice—nay—TEN TIMES as much honey as that! And there for the taking, too.
That would be something to see, Blue Jay.
And if you tell the truth, perhaps you can show us?
Very well—follow me, then!

At the Witch Tree
Carry those pots of liquid marshmallow down there, bakers.
That marshmallow from Sammy Sweet's kitchen is good and sticky.
Here's hoping the hornets fall into our trap.
Blue Jay is screaming a warning in the distance.
They're coming!
Quick with this last potfull— then to our hiding places.
That's the last of it—haul away up there

Hastily Sammy's bakers haul the last of the marshmallow up to a cauldron in the tree.
Blue Jay is approaching with the hornets.
Everyone hide and keep quiet.
Here we are!
Where's the honey, Blue Jay? Is this a joke?!!
'Tis no joke— it's a trap! Beware!

Run!
Stay back! Don't try to pull anyone out of it— if you get in it, you'll be caught, too...
Behold, warriors! On guard!
Charge!

You're outnumbered this time Dragone!—surrender!
Never!
Let me clout her one!
Oof! I tripped!
Now's my chance to get back and destroy that honey so they can't recapture it!
She got away—and unless I miss my guess, she—


She's going to destroy the honey— ho, Blue Jay!
We must follow Dragonel and stop her...
Our men have routed the hornets, Peter.
Now if we can just save the honey—
There she is! Nearing the honey!

Better Way to Buy!

because you get friendly, courteous service.
fresher, tastier PETER WHEAT bread

planned service to suit your needs—bread only or basket service.

a luscious variety of cakes, coffee cakes, pies, etc

KRUG

PETER WHEAT BREAD

Captain Marvel Adventures #105 (February 1950), copyright 1940 by Fawcett Publications, Inc.

Levity, Learning, and Lightning Bolts

By John G. Pierce

In the 1940's and early 1950's, the virtually undisputed king of the comic-book superheroes was the original Captain Marvel. Proof of this can be found in his sales figures (*Captain Marvel Adventures*, which for a while was published every two weeks, reportedly sold two million copies per issue at the apex of its career). A number of comics featured Captain Marvel in *Whiz Comics*, *Captain Marvel Adventures*, *Captain Marvel Story Book*, *All-Hero Comics*, *Holiday Comics*, *Gift Comics*, and other titles and special editions—as well as the multiplication of characters: Captain Marvel Jr. in *Master Comics* and his own title, Cap's sister Mary in *Wow Comics* and *Mary Marvel*, and their funny-animal counterpart *Hoppy the Marvel Bunny*, in his own title and *Fawcett's Funny Animals* as well as a team-up of the human Marvels in *Marvel Family*. There was also a vast amount of merchandising (in a day when characters, unlike today, didn't have to rely on toys and games bearing their likenesses in order to maintain their existence). That Captain Marvel not only survived the demise of the superheroes (which coincided, primarily, with the end of World War II), but became an even greater seller, is also a tribute to his vast popularity.

And the present? In 1972, DC, the company which launched a lawsuit against the Marvels as Superman imitators in the '40's, decided to take advantage of that past popularity by securing the rights to publish the Captain and his fellows. They even hired Cap's original artist, C. C. Beck,

to draw his new stories. Alas, it didn't work out. After an initial burst of enthusiasm, Beck found the stories childish and pointless, and eventually refused to continue drawing for DC. Other artists (including former Fawcett artist Kurt Schaffenberger, who had drawn Cap in the late Forties and early Fifties) replaced Beck, but the stories didn't improve, and an attempt at a rapprochement with Beck by DC failed. In 1977, a "New Look" was ordered for Captain Marvel, and long-time Capfan Don Newton was employed to draw the Marvels in a more contemporary, "realistic" style totally discordant with the traditional artistic style. As these words are written, the "New Look" feature has been retired in favor of reprints of the Fawcett material (something which DC previously tried with lack of commercial success.)

It is not the purpose of this article to analyze why the DC revival of Captain Marvel and his family failed or whether it is possible to make characters from the past fit into the present, but rather to try to establish what made Captain Marvel so popular in the past. The discussion must also be limited to Captain Marvel's solo stories. Though they existed in his shadow (and to a large extent shared much of his mystique), the Junior, Mary, Hoppy, and Marvel Family strips had their own individual styles and deserve separate analyses.

Many analyses have been done of the 1940's Captain Marvel tales; from Jules Feiffer's mediocre and antagonistic coverage in *The Great Comic Book Heroes* to Dick Lupoff's "The Big Red Cheese" essay in *All in Color for a Dime*, Larry Ivie's "The Original Captain Marvel" in *Monsters & Heroes* No. 4, and certainly the most comprehensive, a pair of articles (one on Cap, one on his fellows) in Jim Steranko's *History of the Comics, Volume II*.

However, most of these articles have concentrated on only a few aspects of the old stories, most notably the humor and whimsy which many fans easily associate with the very mention of the original Captain Marvel. Only a rare article like Larry Ivie's even mentions other facets, such as the moral values presented in the stories.

This will not be a comprehensive coverage, by any means. I will concentrate on a select few of the old stories, categorized according to style.

Part of Captain Marvel's great appeal lay in his second identity of Billy Batson, boy newscaster. Most kids reading the stories could easily relate to the youthful leading figure and the ease with which he gained super-powers simply by shouting the mystical word "Shazam!" There was no need to have been born on another planet like Superman, or--even worse--to have had to exercise and study to become a hero like Batman. A magic word sufficed.

And in a day when comics were far more simplistic than they are now, the Captain Marvel stories were simple and direct, easily followed and understood, while the artwork (primarily by C. C. Beck and the members of his studio) conveyed the story in a matching style.

Though it is perhaps an oversimplification, the stories covered here will be grouped into three basic styles: (1) Humor and whimsy, (2) Stories with a moral emphasis, and (3) Tales of pure adventure and/or science fiction. A sub-category of individual humorous touches within otherwise straight stories can be considered too.

Humor and whimsy would probably be the

category most often associated with Captain Marvel. In the beginning of its revival of the feature, DC evidently chose to believe it was the only area into which Captain Marvel stories fell, as evidenced by its floundering attempts to inject humor into each and every tale. In the earliest DC stories, drawn by Beck, the humor in some cases did match that of the Golden Age tales (and much of the comedy was added by Beck himself as he drew the stories), but it was the attempt to use totally inappropriate humor (such as in the Salad-Men story from *Shazam!* No. 10) which, in part, led to Beck's leaving.

Part of DC's difficulty may have been that it divorced humor from the delightful whimsy which often formed the basis of Captain Marvel stories in the past. By neglecting this important element, the writers produced stories with a series of supposedly funny scenes which didn't really add up to a genuinely amusing story, when all was said and done. The stories were silly, rather than funny.

Examples from the Golden Age are legion, but let's first look at "Captain Marvel Goes to Nowhere" from *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 43 (February 1945). The symbolic splash panel showed a puzzled Cap contemplating the meaning of several road signs reading, "No Place Castle Ahead," "Welcome to Nowhere," "Room and Meals Somewhere,", "Danger Ahead, Anywhere Beach, Thither and Yon," and "Going Somewhere? Stop! You're There!" The story involved Billy Batson's accidental radio contact with a voice which said, "Goodbye? Goodbye? Is anybody there? Goodbye?" Once Billy was convinced that the radio message was not a hoax, he learned of another dimension, called Nowhere, which could be reached through a black hole in the sky. Captain Marvel quickly located the black hole and emerged in the Land of Nowhere.

Meeting a citizen along the road, Cap inquired, "Say, pal! How do I find King Nobody?" (the person who had contacted Billy by radio). The citizen replied, "He'd be Somewhere ahead. Just keep going Anywhere and you'll get Noplace. That's where you'll find him." Cap reflected that he'd need a long rest in a sanitarium when he returned home.

Some road signs led him to realize that the castle was named Noplace, so it was there that he headed, only to find the edifice under attack by

CAPTAIN MARVEL
GOES to NOWHERE!
NO PLACE CASTLE AHEAD
WELCOME TO NOWHERE
ROOM & MEALS SOMEWHERE
DANGER AHEAD ANYWHERE BEACH THITHER & YON
GOING SOMEWHERE? STOP! YOU'RE THERE!
BILLY BATSON, BOY NEWSCASTER, IS WATCHING WHAT OF THE LETTERS TO NEWSCASTS WHERE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD?
THE POWERFUL SHORT-WAVE RADIO CAN PICK UP SIGNALS FROM ANY REMOTE CORNER OF THE EARTH
LET'S SEE WHAT'S GOT TONIGHT!
HELLO! THIS IS BILLY BATSON! WHO'S CALLING?
NOBODY!
GOODBYE? GOODBYE? IS ANYBODY THERE? GOODBYE?
HUH? PSHAW! I'VE SOMEBODY TO TALK TO! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?
I'M NOBODY! I'M NO ONE! I'M NOBODY!
WELL, I'M SOMEONE! PLEASED TO MEET YOU!
SOCK!
THUD!
Captain Marvel Adventures #43 (February 1945). copyright 1945 by Fawcett Publications, Inc.

warriors who shouted, "Down with Nobody! Up with No One!" Plunging into the fray, Cap said, "Here comes nothing–to use your own language!"

A green-garbed individual confronted Cap. "Varlet! Who are you? I'm No One! I will become dictator of Nowhere!" "Huh?" replied Cap. "You're No One? Well, I'm Someone! Pleased to meet you!" Cap socked the invader.

Finally, Captain Marvel located the king who hailed him "Here I am, good sir. Goodbye." After Cap introduced himself, the king responded with, "I'm King Nobody, ruler of Noplace Castle and the Provinces of Somewhere and Anywhere." Thanking Captain Marvel for helping to defeat his enemy, No One, King Nobody said, "Come! I shall pay you nothing! Lots of nothing!" To which Cap good-naturedly replied, "That's mighty generous of you." (Nothing, of course, turned out to be the local currency.)

From the king, Cap learned that years ago, the ancestors of the people of the land had rebelled against a tyrant king, and were defeated. As punishment, they were banished by a wizard-

scientist into another dimension, the Land of Nowhere. "We are right on Earth--yet as far away as Mars, for we can't return to the Earth dimension. That is why we called this the Land of Nowhere." It was explained that the return trip through the black hole (not a black hole as we use the term today) killed all men (with the exception of Captain Marvel, of course).

Cap inquired about the radio, whereupon King Nobody led him to their studios:

IT IS NOW EXACTLY—EIGHTEEN O'CLOCK BY NEVER STANDSTILL TIME ! FOLKS, WE NOW PRESENT THE NOWETIME RADIO HOUR
DOUBLE-TALK OVER THE AIR, EVEN!
HERE IS MY PRIVATE NOOK—UP TO EARTH-YOU MAY JOIN IT AT YOU WISH
THANKS!
SHAZAM!
BUT WHERE IN HELL'S NAME DOES CAPTAIN MARVEL GO FROM HERE?
BUT UNDER MY WILL, I HAD DUG UNDER THE FLOOR AND UP UNDER HIS CHAIR
AHA!
HA, HA! LITTLE DID THINK HE'D BREAK INTO THE CASTLE THROUGH THIS OLD FORGOTTEN
SEIZE THAT MAN!
QUICK! BTOOM THE CASTLE! WELL TAKE THEM BY BOMBING AND WIN AGAIN!
RUN F SUN—SOON!

Captain Marvel Adventures #43, (February 1945), copyright 1945 by Fawcett Publications, Inc.

King Nobody was likewise captured and gagged, and No One assumed the throne. Then he made his fatal mistake--he ordered the gags of Nobody and Billy lowered so that they might address him as dictator. Billy said the word, and Captain Marvel, instantly attacked by No One's men, repelled them, saying, "Goodbye--and this time I'm not talking backwards!" Once No One had been defeated, the king thanked Cap again with "You defeated my enemy, Captain Marvel. You have saved Nowhere from No One." To this Cap responded, "Er--let's not go into that again."

No, it wasn't a classic story, but it was genuinely funny to the readers of *Captain Marvel Adventures* (and exciting even to those too young to appreciate the gags). Its humor was not based solely upon the dialogue, but also upon the situation. At no time, however, did it degenerate into anything resembling "camp." Cap did not play the buffoon either, as often happens in contemporary attempts to blend humor and superheroics.

Another very funny tale appeared in *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 56. "Captain Marvel and the Golden Fleece." If one were to categorize stories according to theme, rather than style, this one would be included in the groupings of "stories based on or taking off from classic literature," of which there were several. (Another noted category, revived to mostly good effect by E. Nelson Bridwell in the mid-1970's for his own Captain Marvel stories, was "City-Visiting Tales.") In this case, Captain Marvel thought that he was searching for the stolen Golden Fleece of Jason the Argonaut, only to find that what had acually been stolen was a set of Golden *Fleas*, a mix-up not revealed to Cap until the final panels of the tale, but known to the readers all along. The story also involved a trip to the Mediterranean and an encounter with a dog-worshipping cult before Cap solved the problem.

Captain Marvel Adventures No. 92, gave us "Captain Marvel in the Land of Limbo," a story which might be classed as whimsy alone, though it had humorous touches. The first two panels, for instance, invited readers to "Imagine the strange events that would occur if the things we sometimes say really happened," and gave two examples: "Don't bother me! Drop dead!" followed by the annoying person's keeling over. And "Gee! Dad's so mad he hit the ceiling!" as the angered father's head crashes into the ceiling.

The story concerned one particular idiomatic expression which did come true, as the art director of a museum found a terribly bad painting which he declared ought to "go into limbo and be forgotten forever." Immediately, a short, bearded fellow in rather tacky clothing appeared. "I'm the collector from Limbo. I'll take the painting." Thinking that this man was the junkman he had previously called, the art director gave the fellow the painting. "No, I'm from the Land of Limbo," said the short man as he trudged away with a huge white sack on his back and the

painting under his arm. "You said that painting should go into Limbo, didn't you? So that's where it's going!" The director considered the "junkman" to be a "little tetched in the head" until the real junkman showed up!

Meanwhile, the little man from Limbo was wandering around the museum. Having tired of collecting only junk from Earth, he decided to take some good things for a change so he stole a valuable painting. Of course, he was spotted by Billy Batson, who changed to Captain Marvel, but even Cap didn't think of looking up into the clouds for the little man and his junk wagon.

The next day, Billy was broadcasting from an art exhibit when the man from Limbo appeared, to snatch the statue Billy was describing. Captain Marvel followed him into the sky and to the Land of Limbo where he tried to reclaim the valuable stolen items. However, the collector from Limbo challenged Cap to name the stolen items; Cap was unable to do so because anything that passes into Limbo is forgotten . Finally, Cap gave up and returned to Earth. Later he went back to Limbo to reclaim the two valuable items. The Limbo junkman produced a couple of forgotten monsters to try to stop him, but to no avail. After having restored the items to the museum, Billy explained that Captain Marvel had consulted the police "blotter" where the thefts had been reported before the junkman returned to Limbo.

This was not to be the only time that a Fawcett writer would rearrange Nature to suit his own purposes. When "Captain Marvel Helps WHIZ Get Color Television" in *Captain Marvel Adventure* No. 107 (April 1950), we learned that all color in the world was under the control of the Color Maker. And in *Whiz Comics* No. 74 (May 1946), Cap met the real, live "Old Man River." If these and the other occasions proved Captain Marvel's world to be a little different from the Earth on which the readers lived, they probably didn't let it bother them. Such matters were, after all, no more fantastic than believing that Santa Claus could cover the entire world for gift distribution in one night's time. And none of these fantasies could possibly be as damaging as some of those in which today's youngsters are nurtured--such as being led to believe that the Dukes of Hazzard can jump great distances in a car which will continue running.

There are many examples of humor within the old Captain Marvel stories. Most chapters of the Mr. Mind serial, for instance, contained humorous touches, most of them revolving around the personality and antics of Mr. Mind himself. For instance, in *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 43's "Monster Society of Evil" chapter, a blow on the head robbed Mr. Mind of both his memory and his inherently evil nature, until a subsequent blow restored him to his usual self. In *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 44 in chapter 23 of the serial, Mr. Mind resumed his leadership of the Monster Society of Evil but, due to his recent spell of amnesia, he found himself unable to think up any really wicked deeds. So he decided to enroll in the School for Evil which he himself had created.

HI, MAD! HAVE YOU COME TO INSPECT--?
NO! I'VE COME TO TAKE THE COURSE I HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO BE EVIL!
AND SO HE DID! ATTENDED CLASSES!
ATTENTION, PUPILS! TURN TO THE FIRST LESSON FOR TODAY, IN OUR TEXTBOOK, BY AUBREY, METHUEN!
AH! IT'S ALL GOOD BACK TO ME NOW! HER HAIR WAS NOT IN A FEW DAYS, BY BOWING UP AND DOWN IN MY HOMEWORK, I'LL BE BACK IN TOP FORM IN NO TIME!
YOU'VE BEEN ONE STAR PUPIL HE WAS!
BUT, BEFORE WE GRADUATE YOU FROM THE SCHOOL FOR EVIL, YOU HAVE TO PROVE YOU HAVE LEARNED YOUR LESSONS WELL! YOU HAVE TO GO OUT AND DO AN EVIL DEED!
CAN I TALK HIM INTO DOING SOMETHING?
AND NOT LONG AFTER--
HER? DO YOU MEAN HAD THE BATH, WHO HAVE AGED TO BE MY WIFE BEFORE WE CAN GRADUATE
OKAY, MACHADO! WELL, DO A LOT OF BAD THINGS TOGETHER, FOR OUR GRADUATION!
THE TWO RUN OFF ON THE ROAD, FOR EVIL NOT BUT SOMETHING!
AWK! DO I HEAR THE HAPPY PATTER OF CHILDREN ON A PICNIC? THAT WAY, ARCHIE!
WHOOPEE! WHAT FUN!
WHO'S AND ARCHIE FROM THE CITY ARE HAVING A PICNIC ON BLUE RATTAN RAPIDS, AT STATION WHIZ!
ENJOY YOURSELVES ALL YOU CAN KIDS! GOOD HAM! GOOD BEANS! GOOD PIE! MADE BY MACHADO'S OWN HOME IN REAL VALLEY!
GEE, THAT'S SWELL!
SAY! DO YOU KNOW WHERE WE CAN GET SOME MORE OF THAT STUFF?
BUT IF ONLY COULD SEE THE SAD TIMES GRANDMA FROM THE SCHOOL OF HARD TIMES HAVE DAY EVENTS!
PERFECT! GOOD THING WITH YOUR HORSE, ARCHIE! WE'LL BRING OUT EVIL! BATSON--HERE WE ARE!
RACKET! RACKET!

I mentioned earlier that a sub-category, that of individual humorous touches within otherwise "straight" stories, would be considered. Again, examples are numerous. One which comes to mind is the following scene from "The World's Greatest Stunt-Man", a basically serious story in which Captain Marvel helped a down-and-out former stuntman (and presumably actor, since he had some speaking lines which stuntmen normally do not have) regain his self-confidence.

Captain Marvel Adventures #44 (March 1945) copyright 1945 by Fawcett Publications, Inc.

Cap was taking the stuntman's place, unknown to anyone else. A scene involving a heroine trapped in a burning shack was about to be rehearsed:

Director: "As you rush up, you say--'Ah, how quiet the night is!"

Cap: "What? As I rush into a burning shack, I say *that*?"

Director: "Oh, wait, I had the wrong page! Oh, yes, here it is. You say - 'Keep cool, beloved! I have come to save you!' "

Cap (thinking): "It still sounds corny to me."

Sometimes the narration of a story, rather than the story *per se*, was used to good effect. One such example is "The House That Didn't Want To Be Haunted," from *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 128. The story was narrated by the house itself. And in No. 143's "Horror Hunt," Captain Marvel told the story with artistically decorated captions. For instance, in one panel, Cap (listening to a proposition from a movie director) said in his narration, "You could've knocked me over with a feather," while the decoration in the caption (not in the panel itself) showed Cap being knocked over by a huge feather. In another scene, when a huge monster appeared during the filming of a movie, Cap related that "Panic swept the camera crew and they fled in terror" while the drawing in the caption showed a demonic figure sweeping with a broom. When Cap reported that his eyes "bulged with disbelief," you can imagine what the caption contained.

Captain MARVEL Jr.
THE ADVENTURE WITHIN AN ADVENTURE...
Starring MR. TAWNY
THE FAMOUS TALKING TIGER!
BAM!
SOK!
Captain Marvel Adventures #102 (November 1949) copyright 1949 by Fawcett Publications, Inc.

Moral value has been the most neglected aspect of the old Captain Marvel stories. Perhaps this is because many of them were embodied in the Mr. Tawny stories, and old-time fans who have written articles about Cap frequently overlook those tales (or, as did Jules Feiffer, dismiss Mr. Tawny as a villain, which he never was). Dick Lupoff, writing in *All in Color for a Dime*, said, "I've never warmed to Mr. Tawny," and the author of the *RBCC Captain Marvel Special* of 1970 stated that he automatically skipped over any story containing the talking tiger.

They really ought to have read those tales. Though a tiger, Mr. Tawny was quite human; as much as any other character in the series and certainly as human as two more famous talking animals (in a totally different vein), Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge. Except perhaps for his origin story, *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 79, reprinted in *Shazam!* No. 8, virtually every tale which featured Mr. Tawny as the main player (with Cap being a secondary figure, somewhat like the later stories of Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen with Superman) contained some sort of moral or special lesson. Usually it was Mr. Tawny himself who had to learn the lesson with the assistance of his friends, Billy and Cap. The loquacious feline was lionized by Hollywood in No. 92, lost faith in mankind in No. 96, had a persecution complex in No. 98, daydreamed of himself as a hero in No. 102, was turned against Captain Marvel in No. 113, and went on a culture craze in No. 137. He sought new personalities in No. 115, looked for happiness in No. 117, engaged in a sales campaign in No. 119, had to diet in No. 121, faced a "Pleasure Peril" in No. 128, went on a quest for youth in No. 131, marketed bouncing shoes in No. 134, and became a hermit in No. 149. Throughout it all, in spite of his difficulties, Mr. Tawny usually remained a hard-working individual. His occasional grumblings and dissatisfactions with life were ex-

cellent reflections of emotions most people have felt at one time or another. If young readers could identify with Billy Batson, older readers--and apparently there were many--could certainly identify with Mr. Tawny.

Some stories concerned themes which might surprise those who believe that "relevance" in comics began with *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*. In *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 90 (November 1948), Mr. Tawny moved into a new neighborhood, only to be met with prejudice and bigotry. (He was evidently the first tiger to live in that area.) The talking tiger was ready to pack up and leave, but Captain Marvel convinced him to stay when he said, "If there's anything I hate most, it's discrimination and prejudice against anybody or anything! We're going to hold the fort no matter what they try!" ("They" being the local bigot and his friends.) What they tried turned out to be burning down Mr. Tawny's house, but Captain Marvel saved the day, while Mr. Tawny saved the neighborhood children after the flames started to spread elsewhere, thus proving that the suspicions against him were unfounded. Incidentally, the bigots in the houseburning scenes wore black hooded outfits not unlike those of the Ku Klux Klan.

Not all of the moralistic tales contained Mr. Tawny. One of the greatest appeared in *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 119 (April 1951)--"The Man Who Thought Aloud." This story concerned Jasper Sauer, an employee of Station WHIZ who always had negative thoughts about everyone and everything. A gnome, the "collector of all bad thoughts that you humans have," had to work overtime because of Sauer's outlook on life, so he placed on Jasper the Curse of Spoken Thoughts. Jasper soon found that his thoughts, spoken aloud, got him into all sorts of trouble, including losing his job at the radio station. The gnome appeared again, this time to both Jasper and Captain Marvel, who attempted to intercede. "With that curse of spoken thoughts," Marvel protested, "any man is bound to have his life ruined." For that remark, the gnome placed the same curse on Cap. Jasper gloated over the trouble he imagined Marvel would get into. Soon a rather plump woman approached. But--a captain informed us--"Captain Marvel never has bad thoughts." When the woman passed, the thought which emerged involuntarily from Cap was, "What a jolly and pleasing face that lady has!" Later, when a boy on a bicycle splashed mud in his face, Cap did not have a single angry thought. Finally, Sauer realized that it was only his own bad thoughts which had been getting him into trouble, whereupon the gnome appeared to remove the curse from both Jasper and Captain Marvel.

Still another story of extraordinary moral content was No. 113's (October 1950) "The Imperfect Perfection," in which Billy Batson visited a town called Perfection, a village devoid of noise, dirt, and slums. As Robert Ajax, head of the Perfection Civic League, explained to Billy, "We make people who don't wash their cars daily pay fines. We insist on nothing less than perfection itself. And best of all, Billy, even our people are perfect. Notice how everybody is handsome and noble in appearance. The ancient Greeks gave us our ideals of human form and face. Our citizens must conform to those standards."

"You mean everyone in town is physically perfect?" questioned an astonished Billy.

"Unfortunately--no!" responded Ajax. "We still have undesirable people in our perfect town." He proceeded to point out some "disgusting freaks"--people who had oddly colored hair, or were too skinny, had big ears, etc.--in short, anyone who did not look like ancient Greek statues. These "freaks" had banded together in an "Odd Fellows Club."

When Ajax and his committee attempted to drive these "odd fellows" from Perfection, Billy Batson said "Shazam!" and Captain Marvel intervened. "You don't like purple hair, eh? Well, I don't like people with two ears! My reason is as good as yours!" And he said to Ajax, "You're an intolerant snob!"

Unfortunately, Ajax held all the legal powers in Perfection, so Captain Marvel was stymied and the Odd Fellows finally gave up and left town. Cap decided to visit the grand meeting of the Perfection Civic League where he declared, "I've suddenly realized you are right!"

"Good, Captain Marvel," responded Ajax enthusiastically. "You mean you really see now that perfection is the thing? Anybody who is short of perfection must be cast out!" "Right!" agreed Cap. "But you didn't go far enough, Ajax! Let's make it a rule that all men in town must be just as tall as I am!" Cap then proceeded to measure all the men and to toss out of the window anyone who was too short, which

evidently included all of them.

"Stop, you madman!" cried Ajax. "What are you doing? This is crazy!" But Cap instead grabbed the Civic League head and said, "You're the only one left, Ajax! Are you as tall as I am?" As it turned out, Ajax wasn't. "Why, you freak!" Cap exclaimed. "You misfit! How dare you live in this town where all men must be as tall as I am!" "But--but--that's a rule you made up yourself!" protested Ajax. "Of course it is, Ajax!" said Cap. "That's the trouble with all such rules made by snobs and bigots like you. Who ever gave you or me or anybody the right to make such stupid rules?" Cap asked as he punched Ajax into the wall.

Robert Ajax learned his lesson and soon he rounded up the Odd Fellows to return them to Perfection. "Ajax even joined the Odd Fellows Club," Billy informed his listeners at the end. "You see, he admitted he was the oddest of them all, for ever having thought them different from anybody else."

Adventurous tales, sometimes with little or no overt or obvious attempts at humor or moralizing, were another staple of Captain Marvel in the past. "Captain Marvel Unites a Split Personality" in *Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 86 (July 1948) told how (under a great deal of pressure and strain caused by overwork) a banker, Walker, became a criminal, Reklaw. Issue No. 75 contained "The Yeast Menace," about a chemistry experiment gone wrong which created a blob of yeast which almost inundated the city. Issue No. 114 had two such tales, "The Magnetic Menace" and "The Apes Who Could Make Fire," both stories in the SF genre.

CAPTAIN MARVEL RAPIDLY MEASURES MAN AFTER MAN, AND...
FROM NOW ON, MADMAN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THIS IS CRAZY!
WHAT'S CRAZY ABOUT IT? I'M THE ONLY ONE LEFT ALL MEN SHORTER THAN I ARE THEY'RE NOT PERFECT, YOU SEE!
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE LEFT, AJAX! ARE YOU AS TALL AS I AM?
GULP
YOU'RE SHORTER, AJAX! WHY, YOU FREAK! YOU MISFIT! HOW DARE YOU LIVE IN THIS TOWN OF PERFECTION WHERE ALL MEN MUST BE AS TALL AS I AM!
OF COURSE IT IS, AJAX! THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH ALL SUCH RULES MADE BY SNOBS AND BIGOTS LIKE YOU! WHO EVER GAVE YOU OR ME OR ANYBODY THE RIGHT TO MAKE SUCH STUPID RULES?
BUT--- BUT--- THAT'S A RULE YOU MADE UP YOURSELF!
POW!
RIGHT! THE LEARNED MY LESSON! I WAS WRONG! I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY NOW THAT I JOINED THE ODD FELLOWS AWAY!
GOOD! I'LL TAKE YOU TO THEM AT ONCE! YOU CAN APOLOGIZE AND BRING THEM BACK!
AND SOON IN THE VILLAGE...
I'LL DRIVE THEM BACK MYSELF!
THANKS, CAPTAIN MARVEL! EVERYTHING IS PERFECT NOW! WE'RE GOING HOME!
YES, FOLKS! EVERYTHING IS PERFECT IN PERFECTION NOW! AJAX EVEN JOINED THE ODD FELLOWS CLUB! YOU SEE, HE ADMITTED HE WAS THE ODDEST OF THEM ALL FOR EVER HAVING THOUGHT THEM DIFFERENT FROM ANYBODY ELSE!
Captain Marvel Adventures #113 (October 1950), copyright 1950 by Fawcett Publications, Inc.

Also in the science-fiction field were the three classic stories concerning Mr. Atom, the atomic-powered robot who declared that he would never submit to being man's tool. "I was not meant for inglorious serfdom," said this robot who was, perhaps, symbolic of the atomic threat hanging over man's head. He battled Captain Marvel in *Captain Marvel Adventures* Nos. 78 and 81, before finally meeting his end in No. 90. (The slightly-comical Mr. Atom of the recent *Shazam!* cartoon series was a not-entirely-accurate portrayal.)

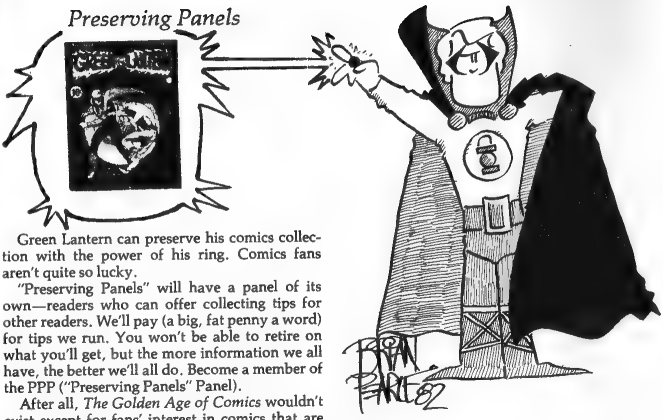
The examples given here have only a few of the many which could have been cited for all three categories and the sub-category. Nor does this grouping of story styles claim to be exclusive. However, most old Captain Marvel stories, especially those from the mid-Forties through the early Fifties (before the horror stories set in), seemed to fit into one of these categories.

They presented a Captain Marvel who not only made his readers laugh with him, but who also made some very powerful and positive statements about life and who, above all else, *entertained* his readers with his thrilling adventures.

Will we ever see such stories again, or are they gone forever from comics? I'd like to think the former, but I fear the latter. Those who created such powerful, thought-provoking, mirthful, entertaining tales are either dead or long since retired from comics. For the most part, their successors seem more interested in cosmic epics, cover-to-cover fights, displays of temper-loss disguised as characterization, and so forth. To write a story like any of the ones cited herein would, frankly, probably be too much work ... if anyone could be found willing to attept to write such a tale.

As Jim Steranko said, "The magic is gone."

Preserving Panels



Green Lantern can preserve his comics collection with the power of his ring. Comics fans aren't quite so lucky.

"Preserving Panels" will have a panel of its own—readers who can offer collecting tips for other readers. We'll pay (a big, fat penny a word) for tips we run. You won't be able to retire on what you'll get, but the more information we all have, the better we'll all do. Become a member of the PPP ("Preserving Panels" Panel).

After all, *The Golden Age of Comics* wouldn't exist except for fans' interest in comics that are even now falling to pieces. This magazine exists because fans care about old comics and are curious to see what they contained. (After all, most fans simply can't afford $30 or $40 to find out whether they'd be interested in a long-gone comics character.)

We want hints on collecting comics. How do you store yours? How do you maintain your want list? Do you ever double-check it? (We lost our want list at the World SF Con in Toronto and had to reconstruct it. In the process, we found we owned comics we thought we lacked—and lacked comics we thought we had. We also learned the advisability of making an extra copy of our want list.) Speaking of conventions, what tips can you share on collecting at a convention? If, for example, you collect original art, you might be well advised to buy an artist's portfolio to take to cons to protect your puchases from the hazards of crowds and sweaty hands. How do you select your favorite dealers? One of the first we ever dealt with, William J. Thailing (Box 352, Willow Station, Cleveland, Ohio 44127), was in business before there *was* a comics fandom and is still enough of a fan to help us unearth rarities to bring to you. You'll be seeing the fruits of his researches in future issues.

We'd like to hear about things from the dealer's point of view, too. Dealers spend each day surrounded by aging pulp paper, and their income depends on protecting their stock. We'd like to hear tips on *purchasing* Golden Age material. How can buyers haggle with dealers without seeming to accuse them of overpricing, when the buyer simply can't afford the quoted price? And, of course, keep in mind that the dealer has to make enough profit to pay for such expensive things as heating and lighting his storage facilities.

We'll leave you with basic, beginning hints: Don't ever, under any circumstances, use any kind of tape on your comics; don't believe tape companies or librarians, if they say some tape won't "age." Support today's comics publishers, who are bringing you the treasures of tomorrow. (We remember suggesting to a dealer in 1961, that he stock up on *Fantastic Four* No. 1. "No," he replied. "These current comics will never be worth anything.")

The Comic-Book Books

by Don Thompson

One of the reasons *The Golden Age of Comics* came into existence was to make available the classics which only a few well-to-do collectors can afford in these inflated times. One of the things we intend to do in this column is to point out collections of reprints of classic comic-book stories for the benefit of those of us who could never pay hundreds of dollars for a single comic book.

For our initial column, we have a real treasure to recommend: *A Smithsonian Book of Comic Book Comics*, edited by Michael Barrier and Martin Williams and published and distributed for the Smithsonian Institution by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., of New York. Any good bookstore should have copies for sale at $25 each.

Now, $25 is a fairly large chunk of money--though only about $9 more than the average hardcover novel these days--but you get your money's worth: almost three hundred pages in full color, thirty-two complete stories, and, most important, some really good stories.

For openers, you get the very first appearances of Superman (from *Action Comics* No. 1, 1938) and The Bat-Man (from *Detective Comics* No. 27, 1939). These stories are reprinted exactly as they appeared in those forty-plus-years-old comics. (According to Robert M. Overstreet's *The Comic Book Price Guide No. 12*, a mint condition copy of *Action Comics* No. 1 would set you back about $13,500, and a mint condition copy of *Detective Comics* No. 27 retails for around $7,500.)

These are followed by five consecutive episodes of Sheldon Mayer's extremely funny "Scribbly and the Red Tornado" strip from *All-American Comics* No. 20 through No. 24. Scribbly Jibbet was a kid cartoonist who kept getting mixed up with gangsters. He was rescued by the oddest costumed heroes in comic-book history, The Red Tornado and the Cyclone Kids--in reality, his landlady, Ma Hunkel, her daughter Sisty, and Scribbly's kid brother Dinky. Sisty and Dinky were about seven or eight years old, Ma Hunkel was a hefty, middle-aged and middle-class woman. The crooks never had a chance.

Barrier and Williams give us the sequence which begins with Ma Hunkel deciding to become a costumed hero after Scribbly told her about The Green Lantern (who had the lead story in *All-American Comics*) while she was trying to figure out a way to rescue Sisty and Dinky from kidnappers. She donned long red underwear, green shorts, a yellow vest with a red tornado emblem, a cape, yellow slippers and, to complete the ensemble, a scrub-bucket with eye-holes (which was worn as a helmet). The fifth story reprinted here has Dinky and Sisty becoming the Cyclone Kids.

Mayer's stories were funny, fast-paced and amazingly full of plot; especially considering that each installment was only four pages long.

(According to Overstreet's *Guide*, mint copies of those four issues of *All-American Comics* would set you back a total of $1,260.)

Jack Cole's Plastic Man is represented in this book by his origin story (*Police Comics* No. 1, 1941) and by the first Woozy Winks story (*Police Comics* No. 13, 1942). For those unfortunate enough not to know about Plastic Man, he was a petty crook named Eel O'Brian who emerged from an acid bath with incredible stretching powers (twenty years before Mister Fantastic/Reed Richards of the Fantastic Four). Woozy Winks was Plastic Man's not-entirely-honest and not-at-all-bright comic relief sidekick.

Unlike most crooks given super-powers, Plastic Man became a super-hero, not a super-villain. And, unlike stuffy Reed Richards, Plastic

Man didn't mind stretching himself into ridiculous shapes to foil crime. The strips had a fine mixture of humor--some subtle, much slapstick--and adventure.

(And mint copies of those issues of *Police* can be had for $1,025 for No. 1 and a mere $300 for No. 13.)

For a sample of Captain Marvel, who hit his peak in stories written by Otto Oscar Binder (who also wrote the first stories of Supergirl and The Legion of Super-Heroes) and illustrated by Charles Calvin Beck, the editors of *A Smithsonian Book of Comic Book Comics* selected the thirty-three-page story that ran in the hundredth issue of *Captain Marvel Adventures*, "Captain Marvel Battles the Plot Against the Universe."

This story is packed with many of the ingredients which made Captain Marvel great--pseudo-science, myth, space travel and time travel, along with a recapitulation of Captain Marvel's origin, an appearance by Mr. Tawky Tawny, the talking tiger, and a particularly far-reaching and typically audacious plot by his arch enemy, Dr. Sivana. It's fast, full of action and humorous.

(*Captain Marvel Adventures* No. 100, according to Overstreet's *Guide*, is a bargain compared to the prices of previous comic books--a mere $30 in mint condition--but then it's much more recent, published in 1949.)

Basil Wolverton, represented in this book by the one-page "Dr. Dimwit" (from *Sub-Mariner* No. 4, 1942) and the eight-page "Powerhouse Pepper" (from *Tessie the Typist* No. 8, 1947), was a very strange cartoonist, best known for drawing supremely ugly people. A high spot of his career was coming up with the winning drawing--in a contest judged by Salvador Dali, Frank Sinatra and Boris Karloff--of the indescribably horrible "Lena the Hyena" in Al Capp's *Li'l Abner* comic strip.

His strips, including the ones in the Smithsonian book, are pun-filled and loaded with silly-looking people and alliterative signs ("Doug's Dandy Dance Dive"). His work had a hilarious crudity about it. I have no quarrel with the "Powerhouse Pepper" story, but I would have substituted two half-page features for the one-page "Dr. Dimwit"--one strip each of "The Culture Corner" ("conducted by Croucher K. Conk, Q.O.C. (Queer Old Coot)") and the Ibis parody, "Mystic Moot and His Magic Snoot." But that's just a matter of taste.

An example of Wolverton's flair for imaginative alliteration is this speech by Rawjaw McClaw from the "Powerhouse Pepper" story:

"Service! Service! I want a big beaker of black benzene and boiled brimstone with a shot of shingle stain, a jigger of jump juice, a hunk of horse harness floatin' on top, an' a chunk of chipped china fer a chaser!"

(Basil Wolverton collectors--and there are many of them--would have to fork over $475 for a mint copy of *Sub-Mariner* No. 4 and $28 for a mint copy of *Tessie the Typist* No. 8.)

George Carlson is another strange taste--among his devout fans is fantasy writer Harlan Ellison and at least one comics historian whose philosophy and politics are the direct opposite of Harlan's. There is no one with whom Carlson can be compared because there is no one like Carlson. His stories had an anything-goes insanity about them that cannot be described.

Three George Carlson stories are included in the Smithsonian collection--"The Fashionable Fireman and the Soft-Boiled Collar-Button" and "The Pie-Face Prince of Pretzleburg" (both from *Jingle Jangle Comics* No. 5, 1943) and "The Pint-Size King and the Three Jelly-Beans" (from *Jingle Jangle Comics* No. 24, 1946). The first and third of these were "Jingle Jangle Tales," from which the comic apparently took its name.

"The Pint-Size King and the Three Jelly-Beans" (to give a small example of Carlson's whimsy) involved a tiny king:

"Things were in an awful mess, so one day when counting his wealth--which wasn't any--he found that he was down to his three last jelly-beans, and he called them to him, saying, 'I am sending you out into the world to seek your fortune, but better still, if you can learn to make some high-power cheese-cake, it would break this evil spell that has made me and my kingdom so small!'

"The three little jelly-beans were all slicked up, with shoe-laces neatly pressed and all, as they set out!"

Well, from there it just gets downright silly.

(*Jingle Jangle Comics* No. 5 costs $40 in mint condition; *Jingle Jangle Comics* No. 24 costs a comparatively mere $16.)

An extremely generous sample--forty-four pages--of John Stanley's "Little Lulu" stories in-

cludes "At the Beach" from *Little Lulu Four Color Comic* No. 74 (1945), "Five Little Babies" from *Little Lulu* No. 38 (1951), "The Little Rich Boy" from *Little Lulu* No. 40 (1951), and "The 'Spider' Spins Again" from *Little Lulu* No. 82 (1955).

The first story has the earlier Lulu, somewhat more of a brat than she later became, creating havoc on the beach; the second has her enacting a terrible and hilarious revenge on the boys who had played a prank on her (this story is slightly marred by having two pages printed out of order); the third is one of those funny fantasy stories she told Alvin; the fourth has Tubby the detective trying to prove Lulu's Pop guilty of *something*. I laughed out loud at least once during each story.

(Cost report: In mint condition, *Little Lulu Four Color Comic* No. 74 costs $340--it was the first *Little Lulu* comic No. 38 and No. 40 cost $24 each and No. 81 can be had for $10.)

"Letter to Santa" by Carl Barks is the first Donald Duck story to feature the "real" Uncle Scrooge, the supernaturally rich tycoon who had more money than could be bulldozed into his vaults. The twenty-four-page story, crammed with comic invention, first appeared in *Walt Disney's Christmas Parade* No. 1 (1949). I need only say it represents Barks at the top of his form; there is no higher praise.

(Overstreet's *Comic Book Price Guide No. 12* lists the going rate for a mint copy of *Walt Disney's Christmas Parade* No. 1 at $160.)

Moving from one genius directly to another, Barrier and Williams follow Barks with Walt Kelly, presenting the first appearances of Pogo Possum and Albert Alligator in "Albert Takes the Cake," from *Animal Comics* No. 1 (1942)--a story also noteworthy for its use of a totally unstereotyped black character decades ahead of the rest of the comic-book business. This is followed by "Feelin' Mighty Hale, and Farewell" from *Pogo Possum* No. 8.

Kelly did better work (see "Nibble and Nubble" in this issue of *The Golden Age of Comics* for a small sample), but there is nothing wrong with these stories--they are all funny and unforgettable, particularly the scene of Albert and Pogo pumping out the swamp with Pogo under the impression he is using a stomach pump on Albert.

(*Animal Comics* No. 1 in mint condition would cost you $640--if you could find it--and you could buy *Pogo Possum* No. 3 for $60 and No. 8 for $48.)

Three superb examples of Will Eisner's "The Spirit" are included--in full color: The "Time in a Bottle" story which ran in newspapers August 4, 1941; the story of "Gerhard Shnobble," the man who could fly, which ran September 5, 1948; and "Ten Minutes," which ran September 11, 1949. Each of these stories is jammed with plot, characterization, humor, irony and action--and each is short. The first story is eight pages long, the other two are seven pages each. Compare them with today's comics where multi-issue stories culminating in double-size issues don't contain a fraction of the *story* Eisner gave his readers.

(Spirit Sunday comic sections are extremely hard to come by; if you could find these in mint condition, the first story would cost you $36, the second and third would cost you $26 each.)

The final section of this book contains a small sampling of the E.C. line of comics, although neither the horror stories which were the line's biggest sellers nor the science fiction for which it is most fondly remembered are included.

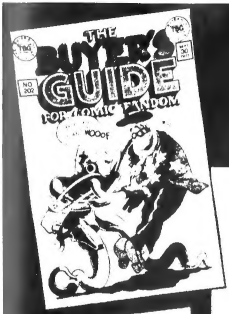
What we are given are two fine war stories by Harvey Kurtzman, "Air Burst" from *Frontline Combat* No. 4 (1952) and "Corpse on the Imjin" from *Two-Fisted Tales* No. 25 (1952); two pieces written by Kurtzman for *Mad*: "Superduperman," with superb Wally Wood art, from No. 4 (1953) and "Howdy Dooit," with art by Bill Elder from No. 18 (1954); and the extremely sensitive and fantastically well-drawn "Master Race," illustrated by Bernard Krigstein from a script by Albert B. Feldstein from *Impact* No. 1 (1955).

All of these E.C. stories are excellent, but "Master Race" would be outstanding in any collection.

(The cost of those E.C. comics in mint condition: *Frontline Combat* No. 4 is $80 (with a special note in the *Comic Book Price Guide No. 12* that "Air Burst" is Kurtzman's personal favorite of his stories), *Two-Fisted Tales* No. 25 is $90, *Mad* No. 4 is $74 and No. 18 is $32, and *Impact* No. 1 is listed at $40.)

So, unless my faithful calculator has failed me, the total cost of the comics from which these stories are reprinted is a staggering $25,884.

And you can buy this book for a mere $25. What a fantastic bargain! You can't afford not to buy it.



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